Louis S. Lebus.

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305

Evolution in Modern Art

By the Same Author

SOME CONTEMPORARY ARTISTS

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Edinburgh Evening News

THE SHEPHERD
André Derain
Fr.
See p. 52

Evolution in Modern Art

A Study of Modern Painting

1870–1925

by

FRANK RUTTER

Author of
Some Contemporary Artists
Revolution in Art
&c.

In that day I vowed that I would renounce every aversion. ZARATHUSTRA

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CONTENTS

CHAPTER		PAGE
I.	Tradition and Reaction	11
II.	The Legacy of Impressionism	34
III.	The Pillars of Post-Impressionism: Cézanne, Van Gogh, Gauguin, and Matisse	48
IV.	The Origin of Cubism	80
V.	Futurism and Expressionism	107
VI.	Post-Impressionism in England	121
VII.	The Triumph of Design	140
	Bibliography	163
	Index	165

ILLUSTRATIONS

PLATE		PAGE
1.	The Shepherd *André Derain*	*Frontispiece*
2.	The Ship *Othon Friesz*	52
3.	Portrait of the Artist *Henri Matisse*	54
4.	Græco-Roman Portrait (National Gallery)	54
5.	Portrait of a Young Woman *Paul Cézanne*	58
6.	Still Life *Paul Cézanne*	60
7.	Landscape with Bridge *Paul Cézanne*	62
8.	Landscape in Provence *Paul Cézanne*	66
9.	Newgate Prison *Gustave Doré*	70
10.	The Prison Yard *Vincent Van Gogh*	70
11.	Two Tahitians *Paul Gauguin*	72
12.	The Toilet *Henri Matisse*	74
13.	The Dance: Decorative Panel *Henri Matisse*	76
14.	A Harbour Scene *Albert Marquet*	78
15.	Mother and Babe *Pablo Picasso*	84
16.	Lady in a Mantilla *Pablo Picasso*	86
17.	Still Life: Glass and Pipe, 1919 *Pablo Picasso*	88
18.	Lady with a Fan *Pablo Picasso*	90
19.	Harlequin playing a Guitar *Pablo Picasso*	92
20.	Still Life, 1912 *Georges Braque*	94
21.	The Mirror *Fernand Léger*	96
22.	Still Life, 1919 *Georges Braque*	98
23.	Mechanical Elements *Fernand Léger*	102
24.	The Red Bridge *Jean Metzinger*	104

PLATE			PAGE
25.	A Lady and her Dog	*Giacomo Balla*	110
26.	Centrifugal Force	*Giacomo Balla*	112
27.	Plan of Campaign	*P. Wyndham Lewis*	114
28.	Composition	*Wassily Kandinsky*	116
29.	The Rock Drill	*Jacob Epstein*	126
30.	Ezra Pound	*P. Wyndham Lewis*	126
31.	The Model	*Mrs Dod Procter*	130
32.	The Village Church	*Ethelbert White*	132
33.	Devon Landscape	*Robert Bevan*	134
34.	The Great Loom, Leeds University	*Charles Ginner*	136
35.	The Back Staircase	*Charles Ginner*	138

NINE PROPOSITIONS

I. There can be no Art without Life.

II. There can be no Life without Growth.

III. There can be no Growth without Change.

IV. There can be no Change without Controversy.

V. Vital art-work is controversial and displeasing to the Majority.

VI. Uninformed opinion is hostile to the Unknown.

VII. Of any given subject the number of persons possessing knowledge is smaller than the number of the uninformed.

VIII. A Minority is not always right; but Right Opinions can only originate in a Minority.

IX. Ignorance triumphs at a General Election.

Evolution in Modern Art

CHAPTER I

TRADITION AND REACTION

Il faut reculer pour mieux sauter.
French proverb

In art there are only revolutionists and plagiarists.
GAUGUIN

ART is the mirror of life, but its reflections are often so curiously refracted that the images it presents are wholly misinterpreted by would-be prophets. The barbaric colours, the uncouth forms, the strange, shapeless figures which shock respectable visitors to 'advanced' art exhibitions, are produced seldom, if ever, by men consciously interested in efforts for social reform. Yet as signs of the times they are not without significance. They bear testimony to a 'divine discontent' stirring in our midst, and in their own way make their own declaration of independence; they proclaim the right of the artist, as of other human beings, to liberty of action, to freedom of expression.

It may be urged that some of these extremists are anti-social in tendency, that like their comrades in other walks of life they demand for themselves

a liberty of action which incommodes or actually impinges on the liberty of others. These and similar assertions may be repudiated more easily by artists than by active social reformers. The revolutionary painter does not constrain others to paint as he does; he forces no one to gaze upon his work. If he has no real message for the world the clattering of his empty vessels will soon die away; if he has a message to give it will not be drowned for ever in an outcry over the manner of its delivery.

Almost without exception in the history of art each fresh advance in painting or sculpture has been heralded by an outburst of invective against the innovator. If an artist shows us a new thing, opens our eyes to something we have not hitherto perceived, forthwith he is greeted with a storm of abuse. He is accused of insulting the public, of throwing a paint-box in its face, of ignorance of the art he professes to practise. All this has been said of Rembrandt and of Michael Angelo as well as of Turner, of Whistler, and of Manet; and it has generally been said first by their brother-artists. The doctors disagree, but most of the patients manage to survive, greatly to the mystification of their longer-lived contemporaries.

Is there, then, no other criterion than time that can distinguish between the true and the sham,

between the genius and the quack? Fewer mistakes would be made, less injustice perpetrated, if it were more generally understood what art is and is not. It is not what a thing is, but the way in which it is done that makes it a work of art. A man who paints landscapes or portraits is not necessarily an artist. He may be the merest manufacturer of likenesses. Literal verisimilitude to the accepted appearances of places and persons is never by itself evidence of high artistic merit. It is the function of art not merely to state a fact, but to communicate an emotion, and the more simply that emotion is conveyed through the sense to which the particular art directly appeals the purer and higher is the art.

In order to clear away a common misunderstanding and to approach the study of painting with a mind free from prejudice it is imperative to remember that the representation of objects, animate or inanimate, does not properly constitute what is known as a work of art. Ability to represent on paper or canvas the commonly accepted appearance of things has its own distinct use. A correct drawing of a church or of an old building subsequently demolished possesses a genuine historic or topographical interest; but it does not necessarily possess any considerable artistic interest

because it is accurately drawn. Accuracy is an intellectual quality, and art is an affair of the emotions. To possess a true artistic interest the drawing would have to tell us something about the personality of the draughtsman as well as to describe the place depicted. It might tell us something of the man behind the pencil in a hundred different ways, by the point of view he had chosen, by what he had emphasized, by what he had left out. By the last we should learn what did not interest him, by the second what did, by the first what his ideas were as to arrangement. Pictorial art, therefore, is not so much a matter of imitation as of selection and arrangement, for it is by what he selects and how he arranges his material that an artist betrays his own emotion and communicates his feelings to those keyed to receive them. All true art is wireless telegraphy.

Though there may be, and generally is, an accepted manner of representation, a recognized convention as to how objects shall be drawn and coloured, there is not and never can be any standardized method of conveying emotion. The great artist is almost invariably a rebel because he finds existing conventions hindering and hampering the full expression of his emotions. When he is strong enough he overturns or breaks through them and

establishes a new convention to suit his own needs.

Now let us consider the matter from the point of view of his contemporaries. They have grown accustomed to one manner or to certain manners of representing objects; it may be by pure outline, by masses of light and shade, by patches of polychrome colour. Suddenly, there appears in their midst a painter with a new manner of his own, the like of which they never before have seen. To most it is unintelligible, altogether incomprehensible, especially to his brother-artists, who at once accuse him of evading difficulties or of high treason against the law of tradition. The presenter of novelties is immediately suspect. His work is misunderstood, and to be misunderstood is not at once "to be great," as Wilde lightly said; it is to be slandered, vilified, and persecuted.

Traditional art is the art of respectful plagiarism. It is perfectly intelligible, widely comprehensible. It appeals to conservative minds because it puts little strain on the faculties of the individual. It consists in doing over and over again the same old things in the same old way because our forefathers did them in the same old fashion. It requires a certain aptitude, a certain training, little thought or feeling, and no initiative. Most Academicians

and officially recognized painters, all the world over, are exponents of traditional art. That is why we hear so little of them after they are dead. They profess to serve art, but they add nothing to the stature of their mistress, and after their little day of ephemeral popularity they are forgotten, because they have left nothing of their very own by which they might be remembered.

This something of his very own is the vital quality which endows the work of an artist with immortality. It is exceedingly difficult to define when we recognize its presence; it is altogether impossible to foretell of what it shall consist or in what way it shall be revealed. This is why all canons and standards of art are useless and worse than useless. They can only deal with the outer husk of art, and more often than not lead to neglect and misunderstanding of its inner living kernel.

The primary and highest function of art is to deliver a message to the soul of man, and, to guard against any possible misunderstanding, let me add that this message is not necessarily capable of being exactly interpreted by words. This function is common to all the fine arts, though they deliver their respective messages through different channels of sense. In the case of the pictorial and plastic arts, however, with which we are imme-

diately concerned, we must remember that there is a duality necessary to the delivery of the message. This duality, as a writer in *The Burlington Magazine* once said, consists of "the creative imagination with which a work of art is conceived, and the technical skill with which it is brought into being." In other words, as opposed to music and drama, where the *rôles* are commonly divided, the painter or sculptor has to double the parts of composer and executant; he has at once to conceive and to materialize his conception. We may agree with the writer already quoted that "it is only the perfect blending of the two," *i.e.*, the creative imagination and the technical skill, "which makes the true work of art"; but if we accept this statement as a satisfactory axiom to work upon we must assign a very wide scope to the creative imagination. We must allow this to apply equally to the painter's visualizing of what he sees, as well as to his materialization of what he has never seen but only imagined. Unless we admit the widest possible interpretation of the term we shall lay the foundation of our argument on sandy soil. Creative imagination may be present in a landscape or a still life equally as in an allegorical picture, and if we allow it to Watts we must not deny it to Cézanne, Matisse, or Picasso.

Subject and treatment are so intimately linked together in the pictorial and plastic arts that it is a task of exceeding difficulty to say where one begins and the other ends, and there are cases when the very technique of the artist seems part and parcel of the message it is his privilege to reveal. From this it follows that an attempt to dissociate an artist's message from the character of its expression ends, more often than not, in confusion and disaster.

All we can say of this message with any certainty is that it is a revelation, and that an artist's work takes lasting rank according to the degree of its revealing qualities. The revelation may be a mere pattern of form and colour, "such stuff as dreams are made on," or it may throw a light on the character of humanity; it may reveal man's physical or his mental qualities, it may discover new glories of the dawn or unveil strange aspects of the night. Its possibilities are boundless, but the one thing it must do in order to achieve high rank is to show forth something which the blinded eyes of ordinary people had not previously perceived and apprehended.

To the old and oft-repeated question, "Who will show us a new thing?" the true answer is, "The Great Artist." Neglect to apply this

criterion to the fine arts, and it is impossible to trace the history of their development and progress. Canons and standards based on technical grounds alone, on what are widely known as 'academic' tests, continually fail in application, either because they do not allow for, or else because they underestimate, the vital importance of the eye-opening capacity of an artist. It is this capacity, this revealing power, which atones for shortcomings in technique, and eventually places an artist over the heads of contemporaries more highly accomplished in 'correct' drawing and suave colouring. It is the weakness and cause of decay in academies that they place overmuch importance on superficial qualities, qualities which are arid and barren without a vivifying influence underneath. They forget that technical blemishes may be discovered by prying into the works of those who are now universally accepted as great masters. Remembering that art is the mirror of life, should we not be more shrewd if we showed more charity to superficial faults? We have the authority of Shakespeare that

> They say best men are moulded out of faults,
> And, for the most, become much more the better,
> For being a little bad.

Do not imagine, then, that a painting can be dismissed from serious consideration as a work of

art because you have discovered in it some technical blemish, because the proportions appear wrong, the drawing incorrect, the colouring untrue to your own experience. Even if you are right—and there is always something to be said for the artist's point of view—these things are not the be-all and the end-all of pictorial art. Out of these 'faults' the artist may have moulded a masterpiece of expressive emotion.

An artist must be judged by his own aims, by his own ambition, by his own merits, and not by any outside standards. From the purely artistic standpoint there is no particular merit in industry, in long labour, in multiplicity of toil. It may be that an artist must labour for years before he is able to express by six lines what a less capable man requires sixty lines to represent. But evidence of that labour in the drawing is no artistic virtue or delight. On the contrary, so long as it conveys what the artist wished to convey, the more spontaneous the drawing appears, the more it has the effect of being dashed off in a few joyous moments, the more completely does it express the emotional fullness and technical mastery of its author.

Painting to-day is a terrible problem to an absolutely sincere, honest, and yet ambitious mind. Fired to set forth something of his very own, to

avoid plagiarism and give the world something it has never yet received, the artist, in whatever direction he advances, finds the horizon bounded by a great master whom he cannot hope to surpass. Well, indeed, may he ask what is the use of trying to do what Van Eyck, Botticelli, Vermeer, Rembrandt, Veronese, Michael Angelo, Velazquez —nay, what Constable, Corot, Claude Monet, and Signac have done to perfection?

In despair at surpassing the limits set by the great masters, he harks back, as the Pre-Raphaelites did, to the painters before Raphael. Alas, Fra Lippi and Taddeo Gaddi are soon found to be too sophisticated! He goes back farther, to Orcagna, to Giotto, to the Egyptians, and with the same result. At last he takes his courage in his hands, and, throwing overboard the whole cargo of art-history, ancient and modern, he tries to forget that a picture was ever painted, and with eyes freed from traditional vision he seeks to recreate the barbaric art of infancy.

Call this man an extremist if you like, but do not lightly dub him insincere and charlatan. He is the counterpart in art of the extremist in politics, the man who has no patience with palliative measures, who demands the whole loaf and nothing but the loaf, who kicks away the fragments of bread

tendered him by the moderate and respectable. A dangerous man he may be, but he is no trifler; and, if he succeeds in his purpose, as extremists sometimes do, the whipped world at his feet hails him as a reformer and benefactor of humanity.

For the last four or five centuries painting has been steadily growing more and more complex. Toward the latter end of the nineteenth century it had become an overstuffed portmanteau, into which nothing fresh could be put except by taking out something already there. The army of art had so cumbered itself with baggage that, staggering under its self-imposed load, it was hardly able to bear, and almost unable to wield, its most effective weapon. That weapon always has been, still is, and ever will be design. The younger recruits at the end of the last century set themselves resolutely to lightening the baggage-train. One by one they threw away orthodox garments and accessories, which they found of little use and even a hindrance to the fighting-line. To the scandal of the staff-college they went naked into action, and as *francs-tireurs* saw no necessity for adopting a recognized uniform.

Such combatants are apt to be dealt with harshly when caught by the enemy, and the rebels of art were shot down metaphorically as ruthlessly as the

Communists were literally. Both had against them not only the organized forces of existing authority, but also the general opinion of a majority lazily content with existing conditions. But no one denies that the Communists of Paris were serious, and most people give them credit for having been actuated by ideals. The painter-rebels, less fortunate, are rarely allowed to be in earnest, or to possess ideals, and the insults added to the injuries offered them are probably due to the fact that the general public knows far less of an artist's than of a social revolutionary's relation to itself. A lucid exposition of this relation was given in an introduction to the catalogue of an exhibition which created a stir in 1910:[1]

> In the earliest ages of art the artist's public were able to share in each successive triumph of his skill, for every advance he made was also an advance towards a more obvious representation of things as they appeared to everybody. Primitive art, like the art of children, consists not so much in an attempt to represent what the eye perceives, as to put a line round a mental conception of the object. Like the work of the primitive artist, the pictures children draw are often extraordinarily expressive. But what delights them is to find they are acquiring more and more skill in producing a deceptive likeness of the object itself. Give them a year of drawing-lessons and they will probably produce results which

[1] *Manet and the Post-Impressionists* (catalogue of an exhibition at the Grafton Galleries, November 8, 1910, to January 15, 1911).

will give the greatest satisfaction to them and their relations; but to the critical eye the original expressiveness will have vanished completely from their work.

The development of primitive art (for here we are dealing with men and not children) is the gradual absorption of each newly observed detail into an already established system of design. Each new detail is hailed with delight by their public. But there comes a point when the accumulations of an increasing skill in mere representation begin to destroy the expressiveness of the design, and then, though a large section of the public continue to applaud, the artist grows uneasy. He begins to try to unload, to simplify the drawing and painting, by which natural objects are evoked, in order to recover the lost expressiveness and life. He aims at *synthesis* in design; that is to say, he is prepared to subordinate consciously his power of representing the parts of his picture as plausibly as possible to the expressiveness of his whole design. But in this retrogressive movement he has the public, who have become accustomed to extremely plausible imitations of nature, against him at every step; and what is more, his own self-consciousness hampers him as well.

The origin of pictorial art is by no means clear. The latest, the most interesting, and the most plausible theory is that evolved by the Austrian archæologist, Professor Josef Strzygowski. This authority, in his survey of prehistoric Europe, maintains:

In the South man passed immediately from the culture of the earlier Stone Age into a social system which sought to cast a spell upon the object by representation, as the primitive hunter attempted to do when he made

> pictures of his game. In the North, on the other hand, formative art developed out of the handicraft of the later Stone Age. It enclosed space in borders and filled it with ornament, which for the most part followed from the nature of the material and the process adopted, ornament which was therefore geometrically designed and pleasing to the eye.[1]

There is much in the Professor's theory which is still controversial. We cannot say for certain whether the drawings of reindeer and mammoths executed by primitive man were an attempt at magic or merely descriptive. A hard-and-fast division between an art of the North and an art of the South cannot be made with perfect safety, but it is no longer possible to doubt that art had a twofold origin and that from the earliest times two forms of art existed both in Asia and in Europe, one mainly representative, the other mainly decorative.

'Decorative,' perhaps, is not the most fitting word to use in this connexion, because all ornamental forms had their origin in symbolism. For example, the zigzag or chevron is probably the earliest ornamental form; it is found on neolithic pottery, it was universally used by primitive peoples, it is still used by savages in all parts of the world. But by these various peoples it has

[1] *The Origin of Christian Church Art.*

been used as a symbol of different and opposite things. With the Egyptians and Assyrians it was a sign for water; to some savage tribes it represented lightning, to others a serpent or a flock of birds. The varied sources from which the zigzag springs prove that the same form need not always have the same origin; but the important point for us to remember is that originally there was always an idea behind the conventionalized decorative form. In a similar way the sun-wheels, emblems of the sun-god, were gradually developed into spiral ornaments, and interlacing, which is so marked a characteristic of Celtic decoration, can be traced to its origin in sacred signs. The worship of the sun, the moon, and of lightning at the dawn of civilization is handed down to us in spiral, crescent-shaped, and zigzag ornament, mystic symbols having been gradually converted into decorative schemes. Ten years ago Mr Ernest A. Parkyn remarked: "Just as the physiologist, by the study of lowly forms of life, has been led to a better understanding of the functions of the highest organisms, so, it has been urged, the study of the artistic efforts of primitive peoples should elucidate the complexities of civilized art."[1] That is very true, but hitherto inquiry has been too much

[1] *Prehistoric Art* (1915).

restricted to representative forms in prehistoric art. Nobody can say now what was the first drawing—possibly a line traced with the finger in the sand or on clay; indeed, so little do we know of the Stone Age that it is impossible to say which came first, the symbolic or the naturalistic drawing. From the fragments of their art which survive, it would appear that palæolithic men were mainly hunters who devoted a part of their leisure to making realistic drawings of the animals they pursued. Neolithic men, on the other hand, were mainly farmers and mechanics; they invented pottery and, possibly for superstitious reasons, evolved a symbolic and decorative instead of a naturalistic art. It is idle to guess further: the point to seize upon is that from the earliest times there have been the realistic art of the naturalist and the symbolist art of the craftsman-decorator.

Throughout the ages the history of painting shows periodic clashes between these two ideals. The old theory that with the collapse of the Roman Empire of the West the art of painting decayed and perished and had to be born again and begin *de novo* nearly a thousand years later cannot be substantiated in the light of modern research. The fact is not that Byzantine and Gothic artists were incapable of drawing a human figure correctly

from a naturalistic standpoint, but that owing to strong Eastern influences the Græco-Roman ideal of a representative art was displaced, for a time, by a decorative, symbolic, non-representative art coming, so far as Europe was concerned, from the East, from Persia and Asia Minor. Professor Strzygowski's labours and discoveries in Armenia and Mesopotamia during the last thirty years have established this point beyond question. The earliest Asiatic Christians disapproved of the representation of the human figure, and were in all probability unconsciously influenced in this direction by the traditions of Mazdean art, for the followers of Zoroaster used a purely formal style of decoration and avoided expression by means of human figures. No student of Oriental art can fail to have observed the extent to which it is symbolic rather than representative and the general tendency to exalt landscape above figure-painting.

The Greek Church effected a compromise between these warring ideals of decoration and representation; it permitted the employment of the human figure, but not realistically, only as a symbol; it was painted not to render a fact of vision, but to convey an idea. Hence the formalism of the figures in Byzantine paintings and mosaics, and the decorative formalism in the art of the Goths,

who, it should always be remembered, had been in close touch with Armenia in their original home in the Caucasus. If further evidence be desired of the pronounced decorative, non-representative bias in early Christian art it can be found in Ostrogothic and Lombard metalwork, in Irish illuminations, and in Northern antiquities generally.

In this decorative and symbolic atmosphere Gothic art grew and developed to maturity; its ideal treatment of the human figure can be seen in the twelfth-century wall-paintings of Brunswick Cathedral and in the exquisite roundel of *The Virgin and Child* in the Bishop's Palace at Chichester. The Gothic convention survives to this day in the Court figures of any pack of playing-cards.

In the fifteenth century, however, a change came over the face of European painting. The new learning, the revival of interest in classical art and literature, changed the current of opinion, and the Renaissance turned the tables by establishing once more the representative ideals of Græco-Roman art. In Europe, from the end of the fourteenth century to almost the end of the nineteenth, the realists had things entirely their own way. There had been no serious anti-representative movement

in art since the fourth century, for the outbreaks of iconoclasm at Constantinople, though significant, had little permanence, and Mohammedan art, with its non-representative bias, only touched the fringe of Europe and affected painting very slightly. Think what Italian art was in the fourteenth and early fifteenth centuries, compare it with European painting in the nineteenth century, and we shall be forced to admit that, whatever progress may have been made in *other* directions, during the intervening centuries there had been a distinct loss in decorative comeliness. Go to the National Gallery in London, compare *The Rape of Helen* by Benozzo Gozzoli (1420–98) with *The Rape of the Sabine Women* by Rubens (1577–1640), and then ponder on the relation between beauty and realism.

There is no need to relate here the story of the European painter's gradual progress toward the achievement of illusion, his quest of anatomy, of foreshortening, of perspective, linear and aërial, of illumination, and so forth. From the time of Giotto the main development of European painting was in the direction of a more perfect presentation of "the forms which nature produces," till the painter was brought to a full stop in the nineteenth century by the invention of photo-

graphy. When the painter at last realized the painful truth that, apart from colour, the camera could give a superficial likeness of anybody, or anything, as well as any picture he could paint, he began to wonder what part the representative element really played in a picture.

The invention of photography very nearly coincided with the exhaustion of the illusory possibilities of painting. The colour-science of the Impressionists and Neo-Impressionists, their research into the exact tints of prismatic light and shadow, their allowance for and discrimination between local colour, atmospheric colour, colour of illumination, and complementary colour—all this was the last word in the naturalistic presentation of the aspects of nature. In this direction it seemed as if there were no new worlds for the painter to conquer, as if he could do nothing but repeat what another had already achieved. Naturally there was a reaction.

That reaction had long been latent in Impressionism itself: it began when Whistler, Degas, and the De Goncourts began to interest themselves in Japanese prints. In direct opposition to the naturalism of the 'Luminists' the influence of the Oriental masters of formal design began to assert itself, and even Neo-Impressionists were

caught in the toils and wavered to and fro between two contending ideals. Seurat, who gave a literal transcript of nature in most of his Pointillist pictures, abandoned himself completely to Chinese —if not Egyptian—ideals of art in his famous picture *Le Chahut.*

Though this aspect of the question is hardly touched upon in this book, it must not be forgotten that Oriental art has had an ever-increasing influence on Western artists since 1850. That influence has never waned, but waxes stronger and stronger, and it is an influence that is no friend to imitative naturalism. Asiatic art and thought for centuries have run on quite different lines from European. In the Mediterranean lands the development of art from the Stone Age to the Renaissance and after has been on realistic and naturalistic lines. The quest has ever been for illusion rather than for formal beauty. But in Asia the course of art has been different. There, as Professor Strzygowski has taught us, man came to art by quite another path—namely, from handicraft to ornament. "Later, when he began to avail himself of nature as a form, he did not begin with individual living beings, but with the representation of nature as an entity—that is to say, landscape." Strzygowski is perfectly right in maintaining that these truths

have not so far been recognized in the history of art. It is because they have not been recognized that there is so much misunderstanding about art, and especially about modern art. Asiatic man has always had a finer cosmic sense. The European is a confirmed egotist, and hence his highest conception of art is apt to be an accurate likeness of his own face and figure. The Chinese knew better.

The state of European painting to-day appears to be closely analogous to that of Christian art in the fourth century. Again we are witnessing what is fundamentally a life-and-death struggle between, on the one hand, the upholders of classical representative art, and, on the other, the champions of a formative art based on the symbolism of the East and the handicrafts of the North. Last time the classics won, but the defeated left a precious legacy, and there arose Gothic art. If history repeats itself the future is full of promise.

CHAPTER II

THE LEGACY OF IMPRESSIONISM

The principal person in a picture is the light.
MANET

IMPRESSIONISM is not, as some have ignorantly supposed, the result of myopia, astigmatism, or blurred vision; it is the fruit of the scientific thought and research of the nineteenth century. The movement which began in France in the seventies was based on two great principles:

1. The instantaneous vision of a scene as a whole, as opposed to the consecutive vision that sees nature piece by piece.

2. The substitution of a natural *chiaroscuro* of colour based on the solar spectrum for a conventional *chiaroscuro* of tone based on black and white.

The first was not a new discovery. It was a principle recognized by many of the old masters; it urged Titian, Rembrandt, and others to give greater breadth and less detail in their paintings as they grew older. To throw back the foreground was an old device, and the painters of the Renaissance were well aware of the changed appearance of objects seen in the distance. Leonardo da Vinci describes how first the legs of a receding horse

disappear, then the neck and head, till as the distance increases the spectator is aware only of an oblong or oval splash. But, though old in practice, the Impressionists justified their vision by new arguments. It was pointed out that the lens of the eye, similar to that of a telescope, adjusts itself automatically to any distance required—but to one distance only at a time. If the eye be focused on a man in a garden then a tree standing ten yards in front of him and a house ten yards behind him are both out of focus. If the painter begins by looking at the house at the back his eye will automatically focus itself to that distance and throw the man in front out of focus. If he fixes the tree both man and house become blurred. And if he keeps changing his focus his picture will contain so many contesting centres of attention that, in painters' parlance, it will fail to hang together. From this dilemma the artist has but two ways of escape—unless he follow the Pre-Raphaelites and, as Mr MacColl says, "put into a picture, say, of a church, all that could be noticed by the architect, by the worshipper, by the dreamer, and by the person looking about the floor for pins."

The orthodox solution of the difficulty, according to academic precept in the nineteenth century, was for the artist to concentrate attention on one

particular object and to render the rest relatively to that object. Thus a young painter might be taught to fix a bright sky so that his landscape might fall together with its tones swamped in a dark mass. The Impressionists rebelled against this teaching and found their own way of escape by viewing the scene 'broadly,' that is to say by throwing *all* the objects slightly out of focus. Perfect examples of this principle of Impressionism are Camille Pissarro's paintings of the Paris *boulevards*, which portray the bustle, colour, traffic, and movement of the streets before the eye has had time to focus on any particular object. He shows us Paris as we see it the morning after our arrival, when we open a window and put out our head to receive a first impression. Whistler's nocturnes might also be cited as examples of this practice; and it is important to discriminate between the two main principles of Impressionism, because there have been many painters—Whistler himself was one—who adopted the first, but never put the second into practice.

Yet the second principle is more important than the first and has affected modern painting more profoundly. It came with the shock of a new discovery, though earlier painters had been moving in the same direction. Even now to a very large

number of persons light and darkness are terms practically synonymous with white and black. Painters in the past have used black when they wanted to darken and white when they wanted to lighten a particular colour, and this rudimentary notion of rendering light and shade is not wholly unpractised to-day. But with the progress of civilization and the extension of scientific knowledge the human eye has become capable of appreciating greater niceties of colour, and the study of optics has given to modern painters a knowledge of light not possessed by their predecessors. That white light can be resolved into a scale of colours ranging from violet to red, that black is the negation of colour due to the absorption of all colour-rays, are facts now known to Macaulay's schoolboy. Pure white and pure black exist only in theory. The surface which appears whitest to us has in it a yellowish or bluish tinge; the deepest dark we know contains to the sensitive eye traces of blue, green, or purple.

The knowledge of these facts about colour and a perception of their truth led the Impressionist painters to sweep black out of their studios, to discard all bituminous and earth pigments, the siennas, umbres, and ochres, and to paint with a palette composed of the seven colours of the solar

spectrum. The change, amounting to a revolution, brought about by the adoption of this palette showed itself markedly in the painting of shadows. Whereas formerly painters were apt to ask of a grey whether it inclined toward white or black, the Impressionist painters inquired whether it was a bluish grey, a pinkish grey, a greenish grey, a purplish grey. Colours were no longer thought of as dark and light, as warm and cool, but strictly in relation to primary and secondary hues. The polychromatic as opposed to the black-and-white view of nature was emphasized by Claude Monet, Pissarro, Renoir, and Sisley, but it had been recognized by Ghirlandaio, Correggio, and other great colourists of the past. Delacroix foretold the Impressionism (or 'Luminism,' as it has been more aptly termed) of Claude Monet when he recorded in his *Journal* his observation of light modifying local colour. Writing of the faces of two peasant boys seen in Morocco, he remarked: "The one who was yellow-complexioned had violet shadows; the ruddy-faced one, green shadows."

Monet and Pissarro not only shocked the contemporary public by the prismatic brilliance of their colour-schemes, they offended it by the method in which they placed their pigment on the canvas. Yet the use of broken colour to give

vitality to paintings was new neither to French nor to English painting. It was the method of Watteau, and in 1769 it was written of Chardin: "His method of painting is singular. He places his colours one after another, almost without mixing them, in such a way that his work somewhat resembles a mosaic or patchwork." Constable attributed the brilliance of his green fields to the fact they they were composed, not of one uniform tint, but of "a multitude of different greens," and Reynolds himself bears witness to the success of this method as used by his great rival:

> It is certain that all those odd scratches and marks which on a close examination are so observable in Gainsborough's pictures and which even to experienced painters appear rather the effect of accident than design, this chaos, this uncouth and shapeless appearance, by a kind of magic at a certain distance assumes form, and all the parts seem to drop into their proper places, so that we can hardly refuse acknowledging the full effect of diligence under the appearance of chance and hasty negligence.

It is idle to quarrel with the method of an artist, since the only thing that matters is whether his skill in the exercise of any particular manner is sufficient to achieve his purpose. Monet is credited with having said in his youth that he would like to paint as a bird sings, and the broken touch, the 'intimacy' of this method of painting, seems

particularly well adapted to the expression of that lyrical spirit which animates his work.

The research into the colour of light, and especially into the colour of shadows, begun by Monet and Pissarro, was further developed by Seurat and Signac, the leaders of the Neo-Impressionist movement. Writing in 1899 Paul Signac said:

> The Neo-Impressionist painters are those who have established, and during twelve years developed, the so-called 'Divisionist' technique, employing as their method of expression the optical mixture of tones and tints. These painters, respecting the permanent laws of art, rhythm, measure, contrast, have been brought to this technique by their desire to attain a maximum of luminosity, colour, and harmony which it has seemed to them impossible to obtain by any other method of expression.

Here is a prodigious number of words which require careful definition. By 'tint' M. Signac means the quality of a colour; by 'tones' the degree of luminosity or strength (saturation) of a tint. The gradation of one colour toward another creates a series of intermediary tints, and the gradation of one of these tints toward light or shade passes through a succession of tones. According to M. Signac, 'rhythm' is "harmony of tint"—though the word usually has another significance in English—'measure' is "harmony of

tone," corresponding to what English artists usually mean by 'values.'

'Optical mixture' denotes the fusing in the eye —at a reasonable distance—of touches of different colours placed side by side. A Divisionist painter desiring a grey does not mix two pigments on his palette and apply the mixture to his canvas, but places on his canvas little touches, say, of pure violet in juxtaposition to little touches of a yellowish green. This speckle of green and violet, seen from a distance, will appear as a stretch of luminous grey. The optical toy with a revolving disk of different colours, which blend as the disk turns, is a more familiar example of the same phenomenon. The size of the touches must be in proportion to the size of the picture, tiny points for a small picture—hence 'Pointillism'—oblong patches for a large decoration; but the exact shape of the spot or patch is a matter of little importance. The vital matter is not the shape, but the colour of the touch. The essential principle in Divisionism is the law of colour-contrast, or the science of complementary colours. Building up a picture, like a mosaic, with little spots of pigment, instead of with sweeping brush-strokes, may give a vibrating and therefore more lively surface, but it will not of itself ensure either luminosity, intensity of colour, or harmony.

To secure these qualities brainwork, not manual dexterity, is required. The founders of Neo-Impressionism evolved a system of colour-contrast which is of greater importance than any method of brushwork. They discovered that "complementary colours which are friends and exalt one another in opposition are enemies and mutually destructive when placed in optical conjunction." M. Signac remarks that a red surface and a green surface opposed heighten one another, but "green spots and red spots, placed in juxtaposition, produce a colourless and neutral effect." The explanation is that the Divisionist painter must treat his spots of colour as light, not as pigment. Yellow, a primary colour in pigment, is a secondary colour in light, being produced by the blending of green rays and red rays. But green spots and red spots give only a feeble effect of yellow, and the painter obtains greater brilliance by using yellow pigment. The scientific contrast of colour, which is the base of Divisionism, must be used with common sense and a due regard to the limitations of paint.

"The shadow is always slightly tinted with the complementary colour of the light." The truth of this first law of the Divisionists was instinctively recognized by Monet and his companions, but they never studied the subject from a scientific

standpoint. The earlier men realized that shadows could not be truly rendered by neutral tints of brown or grey; in a green field in shadow they felt the presence of a complementary colour, and used sometimes a red, sometimes a violet, the last being a favourite hue much abused by ignorant imitators of the original Impressionists.

Where the Impressionist intuitively felt the presence of a complementary colour the Neo-Impressionist reasoned it out. He investigated the precise tint of the green in order that he might scientifically reconstruct the exact tint of its complementary colour. There are infinite gradations of each colour. Every primary must incline more or less toward a secondary; every secondary must incline more or less toward a primary. A red must incline either toward orange or purple; a green must incline either toward blue or yellow. Most people have a hazy notion that the complementary of a primary is the secondary formed by the union of the two other primaries: thus they think of green as the complementary of red, violet as the complementary of yellow, and so on. Content with a rough perception of this, the early Impressionists were lavish in using violet as a complementary in pictures flooded with yellow light. The Neo-Impressionist carried his investigations

farther. He asked himself whether the yellow light inclined toward orange or green. When looking at a field of grass he inquired what exactly was the tint of green in the lights, and according to the precise tint he constructed his complementary, a purplish red for a yellow-green, an orange-red for a blue-green, a deeper orange-red for a deeper blue-green, and so *ad infinitum*.

The shadow is tinted with the complementary colour of the light—that is to say, an orange light has a blue shadow, and as the light grows redder with the advance of evening so the shadows move from blue to green. The laws for pigments seem simple, but in nature the aspects are complicated, since local colours also react on one another, and reflections have to be taken into account.

This exhaustive inquiry into complementaries is the chief difference between the Impressionists and the Neo-Impressionists, both of whom used more or less the same palette, based on the seven colours of the solar spectrum; but whereas the Impressionist mixed these colours the Neo-Impressionist, desiring to keep his colour pure, was chary of mixing pigments. Mixture with white was freely allowed, and also the mixture of neighbouring spectral hues (*e.g.*, violet with a red or a blue, green with a blue or a yellow), so as to cover as

far as possible the variety of the solar spectrum. The Neo-Impressionist obtained further varieties of tint by varying the proportion of the touches used to obtain an optical mixture.[1]

Painting according to the Neo-Impressionist formula became a highly complicated business during the last decade of the nineteenth century, but even the most enthusiastic Divisionist discovered there were limits beyond which his theories could not be put into practice. In a small landscape showing houses in the distance the painter could divide the colour of the walls, but he might find it impossible to divide the colour of details like the shutters on the windows. Opponents of the school promptly pointed out that it was illogical to divide the colour in one instance and not in the other.

The right reply to this criticism is that no method of painting is perfect. Neo-Impressionism is a convention like other methods; for the colour-scale that any pigments can give is very remote from the colour-scale of nature. Divisionism is

[1] The palette of the Neo-Impressionist naturally varied according to the views of the individual artist, but the general aim was to have pigments as near as possible to the colours of the rainbow. It may be of interest to give a specimen palette as set (from top to bottom) by a representative Divisionist: white, cadmium yellow, vermilion, madder lake, cobalt violet, ultramarine, cobalt blue, emerald oxide of chromium, cadmium yellow, white.

dangerous as a master, but it is an excellent servant, and in fairness it must be admitted that the Neo-Impressionists have painted the colour of light and shadow with a truth and brilliance never before attained in the history of art.

If as regards its new theory and new scale of colour Impressionism was the fruit of the optical and spectroscopic research of the nineteenth century, so its slightly blurred vision was an expression of the philosophical thought of the time. It is not altogether without significance that at a period when all England was obsessed by the Darwinian theory, when man was no longer looked upon as a fallen angel, but as a superior animal, the most popular painter in Great Britain was neither a portraitist nor a landscape artist, but an animal-painter, Sir Edwin Landseer. Perhaps it would be a stretch of imagination to pretend that Barye satisfied a similar demand in France; nevertheless, the high popularity of *animaliers* in the mid-nineteenth century is a fact worthy of the attention of historians and psychologists.

Impressionism is at the opposite pole to Greek art with its clear-cut outlines and extreme lucidity. The veiled maternal passion of Carrière's *Maternity*, the mistiness of Whistler's nocturnes, the vagueness of Rodin's *Balzac*—all these are the counter-

parts in art of Balfour's 'philosophic doubt' and Huxley's agnosticism. The sense of the infinite in the lyrical landscapes of Claude Monet led certain poetically minded French critics to describe his pictures as "pantheist art," and the interpretation may be accepted by all willing to recognize that pantheism is fundamentally not inconsistent with agnosticism and philosophic doubt. Greek art, like Greek religion, was finite and definite: Impressionism is indefinite and infinite. Each art expresses the dominant thought and philosophy of its own historic period.

CHAPTER III

THE PILLARS OF POST-IMPRESSIONISM: CÉZANNE, VAN GOGH, GAUGUIN, AND MATISSE

What I pursue above all is Expression.... I cannot distinguish between the feeling I have for life and the manner in which I translate it. Drawing ought to have a power of expansion which vivifies the things which it bounds.

HENRI MATISSE

I

POST-IMPRESSIONISM is a word invented in 1910 by Mr Roger Fry to cover a number of new art movements—reactionary or progressive, according to our point of view—which succeeded Impressionism. The nature of Post-Impressionist painting can only be understood by examining the ideas which animated its origin and growth.

In Impressionist painting there were two real weaknesses and one apparent weakness. It was argued, with truth, that the Impressionists, or rather their immediate successors the Neo-Impressionists, had made painting a highly complicated business, that it was becoming too 'scientific,' and that, after all, art was mainly concerned with the emotions. This statement contained a proportion of error, because the best

paintings of the best Impressionists, Monet, Pissarro, Sisley, etc., are always emotional and show feeling as well as knowledge. The great Impressionists not only painted the colour of light and shadow with a truth and brilliance never before attained; they were profoundly moved by the glory and beauty of light. Still, there was just enough truth in the accusation to make the next generation avoid intellectuality as a danger and cherish emotionalism as their chief good.

A more real weakness in Impressionism was its tendency to paint, not things, but the aspect of light on things. It went to an extreme when it regarded the façade of a cathedral as nothing more than a surface for reflecting coloured lights, and neglected altogether to give an adequate record of the form and substance of the building. Lovely as many Impressionist paintings are in their delicate rendering of fleeting effects of light, they are too often flimsy in structure and unsubstantial. Cézanne, that honest, heavy-handed painter who was never of the Impressionists though he exhibited with them, was conscious of this weakness and expressed it in his saying, "I want to make of Impressionism something solid and enduring like the art of the great masters." His paintings—among which a few great triumphs atone for many

failures—are of great historical and psychological importance, because they are the beginning of a reaction against flimsiness in favour of volume, solidity, and substance. Cézanne is the modern apostle of the third dimension.

Still more serious was a tendency, not so much in the Impressionist masters as in their followers, to be insufficiently attentive to pattern or design. When *plein air* (open-air) painting became fashionable, artists preoccupied with registering the truths of vision were apt to think that any material was good enough as an exercise for their skill. Landscapes tended to become 'snapshots' of nature rather than compositions or arrangements, chiefly because the painter was too concerned with details to realize the importance of his point of view of the whole.

Now pattern is the first essential in any work of art. The last word on this subject was said by Robert Louis Stevenson in his essay "Elements of Style":

> It may be said with sufficient justice that the motive and end of any art whatever is to make a pattern; a pattern, it may be, of colours, of sounds, of changing attitudes, geometrical figures, or imitative lines; but still a pattern. That is the plane on which these sisters meet; it is by this that they are arts; and if it be well that they should at times forget their childish origin, addressing their intelligence to virile tasks, and performing unconsciously that necessary function of their life, to make a pattern, it is still imperative that the pattern shall be made.

In his wall-paintings Puvis de Chavannes—without realizing it—started a reaction in yet a third direction, a reaction against visual facts in favour of an extreme emphasis of pattern. This movement also emanated from the heart of Impressionism, the chief pioneer being Paul Gauguin, the pupil of Pissarro. Édouard Manet, the realist and Impressionist, had said, "There are no lines in nature"; Gauguin the decorator perceived that contours are essential to pattern, and he proclaimed his rebellion from Manet's doctrine by putting a heavy outline round his forms and figures.

We must not forget that Post-Impressionism was born toward the end of the nineteenth century, when *fin de siècle* was a phrase to conjure with: the technical lassitude displayed by certain young artists had its parallel in the yearning of the hyper-civilized for 'the simple life' and in the ideal of the city-dweller to go 'back to the land.' Gauguin's self-imposed mission to Tahiti was an expression of this feeling in art. In an age of grave industrial unrest, of an ever increasingly complicated urban life, the fabled simplicity of primitive humanity appears alluring and attractive to philosophic and romantic imaginations. A true simplicity is indeed a divine quality in any work of art, and it is not surprising that, of all the reactions

from Impressionism, this movement toward simplicity should have been the first to find favour and supporters.

Gauguin's example in emigration was not widely followed, his successors finding that it was possible, with less trouble and expense, to be simple and primitive in Paris. M. Henri Matisse was in the vanguard of those who showed how an artist could combine Parisian home-comforts with an aboriginal outlook. As Rossetti and Holman Hunt had done before them, the followers of Gauguin began by finding inspiration in the paintings of the Italian Primitives. In Derain's early painting *The Shepherd* (Plate 1) the reference to Giotto is plainly manifest, and this quiet, haunting picture, with its note of wistfulness and plaintiveness, seems far removed from the thunderous accents of some of Derain's later work. But for all its quiet and simplicity the strength of the painter is felt. Only here the strength is in repose. Another very interesting picture painted about the same period, *i.e.*, prior to 1910, is *The Ship* by Othon Friesz (Plate 2). It is useless to criticize this picture from the realist's standpoint; for to admit that the rocks are soft, pulpy masses does not invalidate the effect of the whole painting. The merit of the picture does not rest in any notation of the facts

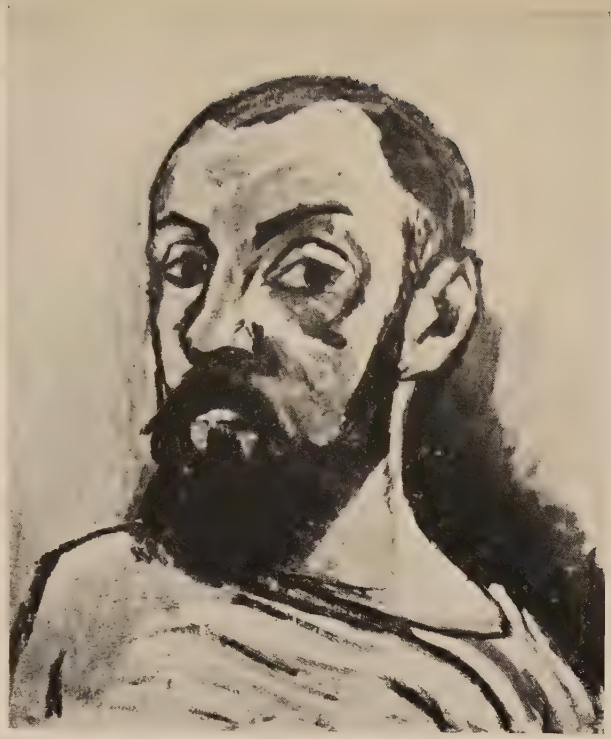
THE SHIP
Othon Friesz

of vision, but in its expression of a mental state. In some quite unanalysable manner this picture is curiously expressive of wonder. The important thing in the picture is neither the ship nor the people; it is the sense of strangeness, the feeling of something coming out of the unknown, the wonder that might be felt at the sight of a ship by innocent minds that had never seen a ship before.

But this period, during which the advance-guard of painting was influenced by thirteenth-century Italian painting, was of short duration. Soon even Giotto was found to be too sophisticated. Restless in their search for a new point of departure, ambitious young painters drew ever farther and farther back into antiquity: they found jumping-boards for a new leap forward in Byzantine art and in Alexandrine painting of the fourth and fifth centuries. The leader of the movement in this direction was Henri Matisse.

Born in 1869, Matisse came from Amiens to Paris as a young man and, abandoning the law studies marked out for him by his parents, he began his artistic life as a pupil of Gustave Moreau. Like all the most gifted young painters of his generation, he was at first attracted by the Impressionists. He studied Odilon Redon, Monet,

and Signac, and painted works in all their styles. As late as 1898 he was still influenced by Impressionism, and his pictures of this period are akin in outlook and technique to the *intimiste* paintings of Bonnard, Sickert, and Vuillard. Soon after this the influence of Cézanne dominated him, and the example of Gauguin encouraged him in laying stress on line, which had always been his *forte*. He began exhibiting at the Indépendants in 1901, and two years later, when he first exhibited at the Salon d'Automne, Matisse was already a conspicuous figure and a powerful influence among his contemporaries. Always an expert draughtsman, his outlines became heavier, his planes fewer, and his pictures seemed to aim at combining simplicity with strength. His self-portrait (Plate 3), a sensation when it was first painted in 1906 and since then a sensation at many times in many lands, revealed the source whence the painter was now drawing inspiration. All who have marvelled at the vitality and force of the second- and third-century memorial portraits of Alexandrian worthies in the vestibule of the National Gallery, all who are familiar with the early Christian portraits on the walls of the Catacombs at Rome, will immediately recognize the similarity between these Græco-Roman encaustic paintings and the



PORTRAIT OF THE ARTIST
Henri Matisse

GRÆCO-ROMAN PORTRAIT
Third century A.D.
National Gallery

Portrait of the Artist by Matisse (see Plate 4). This also has abundant vitality and force, and, however much they may dislike the Assyrian-like physiognomy, people who have once seen it will find this to be a painting which it is impossible to forget.

Matisse exhausted Europe and the art of the Mediterranean basin. To be independent and not to follow his lead, his rivals in painting had to go out of Europe altogether, not physically, as Gauguin had done, but spiritually. So it came about toward the end of the first decade of the present century that young painters of boundless ambition, inquiring minds, and great ability—artists like Braque, Derain, Picasso, and de Vlaminck—began to haunt the Trocadéro instead of the Louvre. The hearts of these young painters went out to Africa and Polynesia instead of to Italy, and it was often amusing for an onlooker to note that mere students who held themselves proudly erect before the works of Raphael and Velazquez would prostrate themselves in all humility before the idols of the Congo.

Surrounded by the carvings of Central Africa and gods from the far Pacific, the rising generation of the twentieth century felt itself safe from the intellectuality which had threatened to make the last painting of the nineteenth century a cold,

emotionless, 'scientific' business. In this savage art the proportions might be all wrong, the figures might be queer and strange; but it was argued, with truth, that for all their crude simplicity many of them were profoundly charged with primitive emotion.

The two reactions from Impressionism joined hands, the reaction from complexity toward simplicity, and the reaction from the sternly intellectual discipline of Divisionism toward a go-as-you-please expression of emotion. From this unorthodox union sprang the race of painters who, rejoicing in their strength, their wildness, and their uncompromising hatred of domesticity, proudly accepted the label of *Fauves* (wild beasts).

Brought up, as most of us have been, to regard painting as an 'imitative' art, it is not easy for us to understand and appreciate the point of view of a *Fauve* artist. As an illustration of the new outlook I recall a conversation I had with Derain in 1911. We had been to some exhibition together, and after we came away the talk fell on African savage art. Suddenly Derain stopped and pulled a pencil from his pocket. "Look," said he, "the human body is a cylinder. This pencil is also a cylinder. It is perfectly legitimate to present a pencil as a symbol of a human body."

Like so much French reasoning this argument appears to be perfectly logical and yet leaves us unconvinced. To detect the weak spot in it we have only to define the word 'symbol.' The meaning of this, according to the *Oxford Dictionary*, is

> Thing regarded *by general consent* as naturally typifying or representing or recalling something by possession of analogous qualities or by association in fact or thought.

I have printed in italics the three words which seem to me to be of paramount importance in this comprehensive definition. At the present time there is no "general consent" to accept a pencil as typifying the human trunk. Any artist who uses it for this purpose is liable to have his meaning misunderstood. But since the history of art provides many examples of conventions, incomprehensible at the time of their birth, which have been accepted as perfectly clear and intelligible by later generations, it follows that a day *may* come when a pencil is universally accepted as a symbol of the human body.

To prophesy in these matters is hazardous in the extreme. Much of the symbolism in Post-Impressionist painting is now esoteric, intelligible only to the initiated. What it will be in the future we do not know, and it would be rash to guess.

We can only "wait and see," remembering with becoming humility that our own personal mind does not represent the final wealth of understanding of which humanity is capable.

Having thus briefly indicated the general train of reasoning followed by the Post-Impressionists, it will be advisable to study more closely the development of the great painters who may be regarded as the four pillars supporting the edifice of Post-Impressionism. One of the strangest things in this singularly interesting movement is that artists of all styles found a rallying-point for their rebellion against realism in the paintings of the realist Cézanne.

II

Paul Cézanne (1839–1906) was numbered in his lifetime among the Impressionists, with whom he exhibited; to-day he is commonly regarded as the Father of Post-Impressionism. The unique position he holds between the older and younger schools is best explained by his own words: "I wish to make of Impressionism something solid and enduring like the art of the old masters." Whereas most of his painter-comrades were preoccupied with rendering fugitive effects of light,

PORTRAIT OF A YOUNG WOMAN 58
Paul Cézanne

Cézanne was concerned with expressing in terms of colour the eternal verities of objects.

When Cézanne paints a plate of apples we do not think at all of the light by which it is seen, but we receive a vigorous impression of the weight, density, and solidity of the fruit. His art is simpler and less complicated than that of Monet and Pissarro, his analysis of colour is more summary, his expression ruder and more forcible. His palette was entirely his own, and the prevalence of browns in his paintings would alone separate him from the other Impressionists. His pictures seem heavy in handling compared with the delicate work of Renoir and Sisley, but by reason of his whole-hearted sincerity and honesty of purpose they make a stronger and deeper impression.

Cézanne has had the greatest influence of any one modern painter, and his influence has been both for good and evil. As Hoppner remarked of Reynolds more than a hundred years ago, it is always easier to imitate the defects than the virtues of a master: and the defects of Cézanne have been imitated *ad nauseam*. His chief weakness lay in the fact that, like so many other French painters, he cherished a secret belief that it was a duty to paint something like a Poussin. His figure compositions of nude figures in a landscape are

interesting as experiments in tri-dimensional design, but I have never seen one that satisfied me completely as a whole; many are deplorable failures that we should mercifully forget. These, of course, are the Cézannes which have been most imitated.

Among his portraits (see Plate 5) and scenes of contemporary life are three or four which, among other qualities, possess an unconscious power of characterization approaching the poignancy of a Rembrandt. In his landscapes—so different to the Impressionist landscapes by Northern painters because Cézanne, a man of the South, adhered faithfully to the colour and contours of the Southern landscape he painted—he often achieved true originality and distinction, presenting us with a decorative pattern of substantial forms which expressed admirably the true character of his native land.

But his greatest achievements and those in which he showed himself most completely a master were his still-life paintings. As craftsmen Chardin and Fantin-Latour may have painted fruit more beautifully, but nobody yet has painted fruit so *powerfully* as Cézanne. Before these pictures, so intense in their colour, so extremely luminous, so massive in their realization of volume and weight, we get

STILL LIFE
Paul Cézanne

an idea that lurking in the recesses of the painter's mind was a sense of the irresistible power of nature. We, who forget the mighty effort put forth by nature to produce the fruit spread idly on our dinner-table, have to be stunned and knocked over, as by cannon-balls, with the pears and apples of Cézanne before we call to mind the hidden forces which have brought them to birth (see Plate 6). It is this manifestation of worship for the rude vigour of elemental forces which tempts many to see in Cézanne the Nietzsche of modern painting.

That Cézanne himself was conscious of all that we read into his still-life paintings we may gravely doubt. He was of the order of painters who paint just because they cannot put their thoughts and emotions into words. What exactly it was that he felt Cézanne probably never knew, but it would be the greatest error to imagine that in his stress on the third dimension, on solidity in objects and on recession in a landscape, Cézanne ever aimed at producing merely an illusion of the appearance of nature. One proof of this is his careful avoidance of anything like aërial perspective, the fusion of one tone with another. His nearest approach to this fusion is his *Landscape with Bridge* (Plate 7). But in the landscapes of his maturity it will be

found that distance is suggested by a series of separate planes, and often the number of these planes is astoundingly small. To say that Cézanne was a realist is not the same as to say that he was an illusionist, and the way in which so many of his pictures seem to be a blend of real-land and dreamland is a matter that courts further inquiry.

Sir Francis Galton in his *Inquiries into Human Faculty* devoted considerable attention to the power of visualizing. It will be remembered that he circulated a dozen questions on this subject to a variety of persons, and that as a result of his investigations he discovered the power of visualizing to be higher in the female sex than in the male, and somewhat higher in schoolboys than in men, the evidence tending to suggest that a habit of "hard abstract thinking" among the middle-aged impaired this faculty of visualization. Galton also concluded from his researches that "the visionary tendency is much more common among sane people than is generally suspected."

This branch of Galton's inquiry has been developed and applied to art by the German philosopher Hermann Bahr in a short but extremely stimulating monograph on *Expressionism*. Now drawing from memory has been practised and

LANDSCAPE WITH BRIDGE 62
Paul Cézanne

encouraged as an important part of education since the time of Lecoq de Boisbaudran, but Bahr contends that the power of seeing with "the mind's eye," which nearly all children and some grown-up people possess, is

> more than a mere remembering or reproducing of objects and scenes viewed with the physical eye: it is a kind of individual production...a kind of creative power belonging to a different world with different laws from those which rule the world we behold with our physical sight....
>
> If then we look with the mind's eye at that which we usually see with the bodily eye, we behold a world which, compared with the latter, seems to us abnormal and distorted because it differs from it. Anyone who has this power...views an entirely different world from that which his physical eye beholds, and also different from that which is beheld by another possessing the same faculty. Each person differs from another far more widely in the manner of his mental vision than in the manner of his bodily vision. It is far more individualized than physical sight, because the individual plays a larger part in the inner act of seeing than in the outer.

Too much evidence exists for any person to deny that an 'inner' and an 'outer' vision exist, and, once conscious of this distinction between the phenomena of appearance, man "has no alternative but that of flight from the world into himself, or from himself into the world—or a third choice is possible: that of halting on the boundary-line between the two."

Primitive art may be explained by man's fear of Nature.

> He escapes from her into himself. . . . Art frees him by drawing appearance from the depths and by flattening it out on a plane surface. Primeval man sees lines, circles, squares, and he sees them all flat, and he does so owing to the inner need of turning the threat of nature away from himself.

In this, it may be argued, primitive man showed wisdom, for in the East man, "mature and civilized," similarly repulsed Nature, only now with an added knowledge:

> Appearance has been seen through and recognized as illusion, and, should the deceiving eye try to entice him into this folly, he is taught by knowledge to withstand. In the East all beholding is tempered by an element of comprehending pity, and wherever the wise man gazes he sees only that which he knows: the eye takes in the outer stimulus, but only to unmask it instantly. All seeing, for him, is a looking away from nature. We, with our eyes, are still incapable of even imagining this state, for we still see everything, as far as the circle of our civilization reaches, with the eye of the Greek.

In passing, doubt may be expressed whether we really do see Nature with "the eye of the Greek," who anthropomorphized clouds, rivers, trees, etc. But as regards human form it is undeniable that the Greeks turned man toward Nature and hastened him toward the pursuit of Illusion. The logical result of Renaissance painting is the seemingly

lighted cigarette painted so cunningly on what appears to be a shelf of the wall that the alarmed observer hastens to pick it up before it sets fire to the woodwork.

Now, after some six centuries of pictorial naturalism, European art is beginning to wonder whither it is travelling. This, according to Bahr, is the true explanation of the paintings which in recent years have shocked the orthodox:

> As primitive man, driven by fear of nature, sought refuge within himself, so we, too, have to adopt flight from a 'civilization' which is out to devour our souls. . . . If Expressionism at the moment behaves in an ungainly violent manner its excuse lies in the prevailing conditions it finds.

This is a most ingenious and interesting theory, and I believe there is much truth in it; though I cannot accept it as fully explaining *all* the developments of Post-Impressionism. It seems doubtful, for example, whether Braque, Léger, and Picasso 'see within themselves' that which they paint; it is equally reasonable to suppose that they definitely select from outer stimuli such material as they require to create their pictures, which are thus *invented* rather than 'seen.'

Though the most eloquent champion Expressionism has yet had, Bahr is no extremist and frankly confesses that in Expressionism—"a tocsin

of alarm given out by panicstricken souls"—painting has gone to the other extreme. It will be remembered that he gave as man's third choice the possibility of halting on the boundary-line between the inner and outer vision. His contention is that in the work of a few great artists—he names Rembrandt and Cézanne as examples—a compromise is arrived at:

> The inner and outer seeing powers tend to unite; neither is able to predominate and crowd out the other, but each is able to maintain itself and to let the other live also; nay, even to interpenetrate the other and amalgamate with it, and, in losing itself, really finds itself more fully than before.

If we accept this theory we may regard Cézanne's portrait of his wife, shown in July 1925 at the Leicester Galleries, as a kind of composite picture of (i) Mme Cézanne as seen by her husband with his eyes shut, and (ii) Mme Cézanne as seen by the painter with his eyes open. There is nothing in the painting to contradict, but much to confirm this theory.

The new light thrown on Cézanne by Hermann Bahr's criticism is particularly welcome as an argument against a tendency to belaud this master because he was 'more real' than the Impressionists. Nothing could be farther from the truth. Cézanne had no illusion about Illusion. Whereas the typical

LANDSCAPE IN PROVENCE 66

Paul Cézanne

Showing accent on cubic form. See p. 81.

Impressionist landscape divides the distance into an infinite number of planes, Cézanne's *Landscape in Provence* (Plate 8)—a splendid example of his powers at their highest—sums up foreground and background in practically two planes. The emphasis on volumes in the foreground does not cut up one of the two main divisions, but helps instead of hindering the simplification of the whole theme. I cannot agree with Mr R. R. Tatlock that Cézanne "started off with the instincts of a sculptor, and his real desire was to force paint to express tactile values"; nor do I see easily how this can be reconciled with the same writer's later statement that "Cézanne's great achievement was to re-express European art of the nineteenth century in terms of design."[1]

Where is the "real desire to express tactile values" in *Mme Cézanne* or *L'Estaque* or in the almost Japanesque drawing *Sainte-Victoire*? Bahr's theory seems much nearer the mark. Still better is the suggestion of a writer in the *Birmingham Post* that Cézanne was a St Francis of modern painting: "Nature was for him a living thing, and it impressed upon his mind its enduring and vital images. He was not concerned with any imitation

[1] *Catalogue of the Paul Cézanne Exhibition*, with a Prefatory Note by R. R. Tatlock (Leicester Galleries, 1925).

of natural forms, but with the emotional expression of the ideas they evoked." That, perhaps, is as near as we are likely to get to the secret of Cézanne's hold on our imagination and affection.

Vincent Van Gogh (1853–90) exclaims in one of his letters: "I want to paint humanity, humanity, and again humanity." A Dutchman by birth, Van Gogh was slow to find his true vocation, and he experienced life as a shop-assistant, a schoolmaster, and a missionary before he began painting at Paris in 1886 under the influence of Pissarro and Seurat. Though now described as a 'Post-Impressionist,' he adhered throughout his life to Neo-Impressionist ideals of painting, only, instead of using spots and patches for the separation of colour, he juxtaposed fine lines of pigment. For this practice he had good authority, since Pissarro had already discovered that the grey shadows round the bottle-nose of Ghirlandaio's old man at the Louvre were built up of thin hair-lines of red and green paint.

Van Gogh was not the inventor of a new technique, but he rapidly developed a distinctive style of his own, remarkable for its vehemence of attack, fierce strokes of paint being rained like blows on the canvas. He was the most passionate of painters, and the extraordinary intensity of his

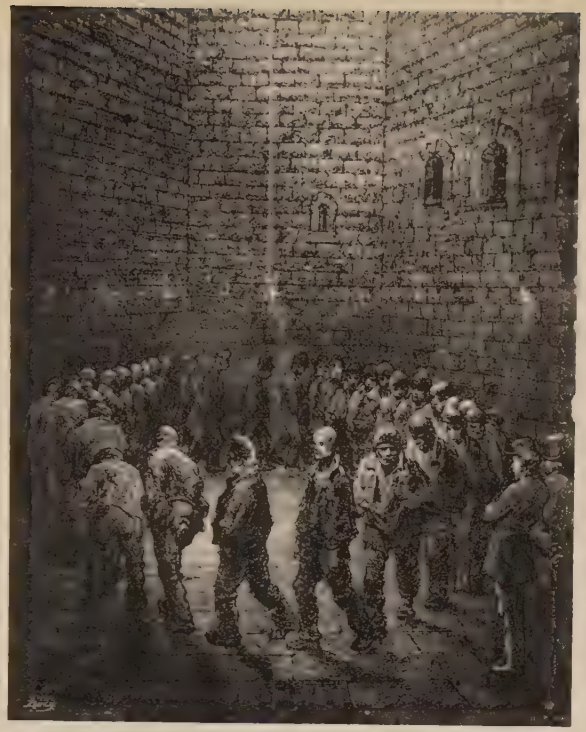
vivid impressions may be likened to our vision of things seen momentarily in the duration of a lightning-flash. His colour is of a high order and pitch, showing a fine sensibility for the splendour of pigment, but he was too seriously absorbed in life and humanity for his paintings ever to degenerate into mere decorations. The fact that his mind eventually became unhinged, so that in his last years he produced pictures betraying an abnormal vision, does not invalidate the splendid sanity of the bulk of his productions, nor do certain experiments in other directions hinder us from ranking Van Gogh among the great realists of painting. In another letter Van Gogh writes:

> When Gauguin was at Arles I allowed myself to be led into working from imagination. But it is an enchanted land, and suddenly one finds oneself confronted with an insurmountable stone wall.... Maybe after a life spent in manly effort and endeavour and after a hard struggle shoulder to shoulder with nature, one might venture to try it; but for the present I shall not crack my brains over it, and I have slaved all the year round painting from nature.

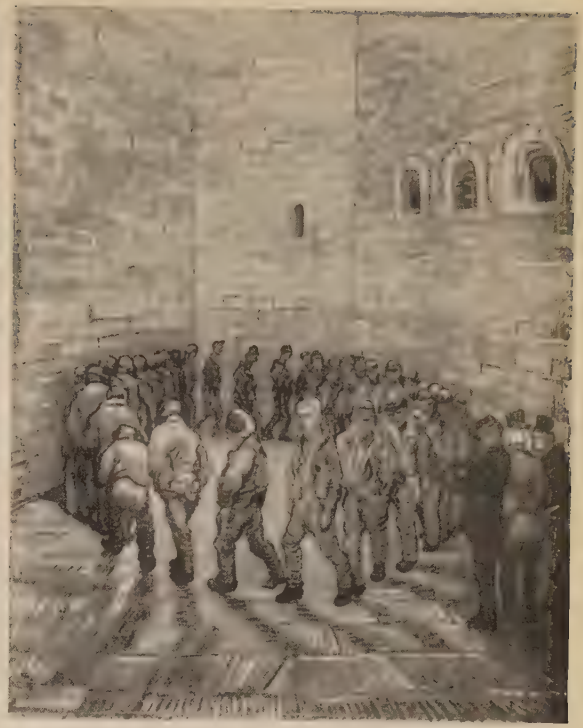
"Art for Art's sake" is a doctrine which might appeal to a Gauguin, but never to a Van Gogh. Temperamentally he was a humanist; technically he was a Luminist. His tower of strength was in his illumination, and how completely dramatic

lighting can change the whole spirit and character of a painting becomes obvious the moment we compare Van Gogh's picture *The Prison Yard* (Plate 10) with *Newgate Prison* (Plate 9), the drawing by Gustave Doré on which it was based. The subject is exactly the same, man for man and brick for brick; the expression and the interpretation are utterly different. The Doré is a clear, unemotional statement of fact: the Van Gogh pierces us like a cry from one in agony.

Vision meant so much to Van Gogh that he could work himself up into a state of cerebral excitement when he was looking at a pair of old boots or a kitchen chair; and the marvellous thing is that, however absurd it may seem to us at other moments to choose such subjects for painting, before Van Gogh's pictures we are swept off our feet by the vehemence of his attack. We are compelled to take these things and his paintings of them seriously, and, if we yield ourselves to the mood of the painter, appreciating his motives, we seem to hear the quivering, high-pitched voice of a religious fanatic crying aloud: "Praise God in all things; there is nothing common or unclean!" Psychologically Van Gogh is the most fascinating and pathetic figure in the history of painting; æsthetically he set painters an example by his



NEWGATE PRISON
Gustave Doré



THE PRISON YARD
Vincent Van Gogh

mastery of dramatic illumination and by the passionate intensity of his sincerity.

Both Cézanne and Van Gogh helped to put a backbone into modern painting, to give it a reality and substance lacking equally in the polished wax-works of Bouguereau and in the elegant ghosts of Whistler.

Paul Gauguin (1848–1903) also learnt painting from Camille Pissarro, whose style he copied closely in his earliest works. But Gauguin never was a realist; his romantic temperament found its ideal among the unspoilt barbarians of the Pacific. His mother was a Creole, and he was born with a passion for the tropics. He soon broke away from the dogmas of the Neo-Impressionists, though his debt to them is confessed in the splendour of his colour—his magnificent yellows shine with the mellow glow of old stained glass. He made certain innovations, he deliberately simplified forms and reintroduced the fashion of binding them with rude, dark outlines, but after admitting the technical interest and decorative merit of his work in Brittany it remains doubtful whether Gauguin would have been so great a figure in modern art had he not sailed in 1891 to Tahiti. Thereafter his subjects had an intrinsic interest apart from his treatment of them, and his project of painting

primitive folk in a primitive style made a wide appeal to the popular imagination. Like Stevenson, Gauguin was fascinated by the life and manners of the Kanakas. "All the joys, animal and human, of a free life are mine," he wrote enthusiastically after his arrival. "I have escaped everything that is artificial, conventional, customary. I am entering into truth, into nature." So Gauguin wrote, but he never entered into truth; he stepped into a land of dreams, and his pictures remained a convention (see Plate 11). When a literary friend in Paris quarrelled with his ideal, Gauguin replied: "Your civilization is your disease, my barbarism is my restoration to health."

Gauguin, we see clearly, was neither a realist like Cézanne nor a humanist like Van Gogh: he was first and foremost a decorator. To him, more than to any other artist since Puvis de Chavannes, we are indebted for a vehement restatement of the prime necessity of pattern. To these two painters we chiefly owe the reintroduction of line as a main feature of decorative construction. At a time when the building up of pictures by minute touches of pigment was becoming a dogma Gauguin returned to the use of a sweeping brush and the construction of pictures by large masses of flat colour. So far as it has made for a true simplicity Gauguin's influence

TWO TAHITIANS
Paul Gauguin

72

has been for good. So far as it has made for an affectation of archaism it has been exceedingly bad.

However distasteful the character of the man may be to us we have reason to be grateful to the artist. Gauguin was the first of his school to make war on the complexity of Neo-Impressionist painting and to assert the necessity of stating truths simply. He knocked the bottom out of Divisionism as a dogma by his crushing remark, "A metre of green is more green than a centimetre if one wishes to express greenness."

One can easily make out a case for regarding modern civilization as a disease. There is a great deal in city life that is repugnant to a thoughtful man; the yearning for a simple life among artists had its parallel in the "Back to the land" movement in politics. "If our life is diseased," argued certain Paris artists, "our art must be diseased also, and we can only restore art to health by starting it afresh like children or savages." So began the reaction against the complexity of Neo-Impressionist painting, and this movement, influenced by the example of Gauguin, gave birth to the painters known as the *Fauves*.

The *Fauviste* movement may be regarded as an extreme emotional reaction against cold intellectual tendencies. Art is always swinging between

emotion and intellectuality, and painters who preserve a just balance between the two are rare. The Impressionists and Neo-Impressionists were accused of being too scientific; their works were said to be lacking in feeling. Since they had laid the accent on colour the reactionaries laid stress on form and design, which they considered the Impressionists had neglected. The accusation was not altogether true, for, without reference to the superb draughtsmanship of Degas, it is now admitted that Seurat was a most accomplished designer, while Paul Signac has proved his own attention to linear composition by brilliant work in black and white.

Nevertheless, sympathy is not altogether to be denied to the younger generation of painters who sought to make painting less complicated and simpler. A similar reaction in England, fifty years earlier, led Millais and Holman Hunt to go back to the painters before Raphael for qualities of line and colour which they thought desirable. The Paris painters, in their rage against civilization, went farther back. One by one all the old masters —except El Greco—were swept aside by revolutionaries who sought inspiration from the rudimentary art of savages and barbarians. Forcible, child-like scrawls began to appear in Paris

THE TOILET 74
Henri Matisse
Showing emphasis on pattern. See p. 76.

exhibitions, paintings based not on any fresh view of nature, but on the prehistoric art of Egypt, Turkestan, Polynesia, and Central Africa.

The virtue of eclectic art, of painting based on other paintings, is always a little doubtful. With great candour Matisse has confessed: "I have never avoided the influence of others....I should consider that as cowardice and a lack of sincerity toward myself. I believe that the personality of an artist develops and affirms itself by the struggles it has to undergo....If the combat is fatal for him it is because such was destined to be his fate." Whatever influences he exposed himself to in his youth, to-day Matisse is more influencing than influenced. The passion for simplicity and the desire to secure a maximum of expression with a minimum of means—which are the chief virtues of the *Fauviste* movement—are found in the highest degree in his work. Influenced by Gauguin, Matisse is in no sense an imitator: he is a greater draughtsman than Gauguin, and though he has retained the high-keyed Impressionist palette of bright, clean colours he has abandoned the mosaic method of painting, using a sweeping brush and large planes of colour to fill in the masses of what are essentially linear designs. Many of his drawings are wonderful and masterly in their summary

expression of form and movement; no artist, not even Phil May, has expressed so much with so few lines; but, while admiring the extraordinary sureness and simplicity of his drawing, we are often bewildered by his wilful distortion of natural form. These perversities have been defended by M. Michel Puy, who states that when Matisse exaggerates deformity he is led to it by a necessity of temperament which pushes him, whenever he sees a truth, to affirm it without discretion even to the point of paradox. It is difficult to believe that only passion for truth urges Matisse to present the calf of a leg as greater in circumference than its thigh, and there are no other qualities in his works which persuade us that realism is his aim. On the other hand, decorative intent is patent in all his pictures, and we frequently find distortions of form, as in *The Toilet* (Plate 12), helping and emphasizing the rhythm and equilibrium of the linear pattern. We are led to the conclusion, therefore, that these distortions are subjective and not objective in origin, and that Matisse wishes us to admire his paintings not because the subjects are beautiful, not because his representation of them is true to nature, but because he has created a pattern of line and colour which should appeal to pure æsthetic sensibilities.

THE DANCE : DECORATIVE PANEL
Henri Matisse

The simplification of forms begun by Gauguin has been carried to an extreme by Matisse. He has openly confessed that his ambition is to recapture the naïve, innocent outlook of a child. If only it could be done! The trouble is that the assumption of a pseudo-innocence often results in nothing but nauseating affectation. Excessive simplification may end in a *reductio ad absurdum*. It can unkindly be said of too many of the paintings of Matisse that they are nothing more than a lick of paint and a promise.

But this is the worst that can be said of a man who remains a great figure and an artist of striking, if often perverse, originality. At his best Matisse has the gift of expressing gesture and character by contours of extraordinary simplicity. To express his *thought* as simply and directly as possible is always the aim of this artist; and he accomplishes his purpose by drawing a line round his mental conceptions without the slightest desire to give his paintings an illusion of reality.

To give a maximum of expression by a minimum of means—that is surely a noble ambition for any artist to possess. In fairness we must acknowledge that in many of his paintings and decorations—but by no means in all—Matisse has accomplished this purpose. Very characteristic of his powers is the

decorative panel *The Dance* (Plate 13), first exhibited at the Salon d'Automne of 1910. It is idle to say we do not like the raw blue and green against which these brick-red figures are dancing. It is more pertinent to observe that these same figures are tremendously expressive of life and movement, and that they are executed with an amazing simplicity. Here is a diagonal figure sweeping through the air, there is an upright figure twirling through the dance in an ecstasy of supple posturing; and all these figures are expressed by half a dozen swirling outlines. We may like it or dislike it, but to deny its emotional force or the consummate mastery of its execution is only to confess our own lack of sensibility.

A talent so supreme, so wilful, so anarchic, almost amounts to a public danger. To many of his contemporaries the art of Matisse has been a deadly pitfall. But to the few who have understood him and kept their heads it has been an inspiration. No painter has derived more profit from his example than his old friend and comrade Albert Marquet, whose simplified quaysides and harbour scenes, clear-cut in pattern, clean and blonde in colour, must be reckoned among the most undeniably beautiful pictures which Post-Impressionism has given us (see Plate 14).

A Harbour Scene
Albert Marquet

If the rational simplicity of Matisse's early-middle period has been developed with admirable results by Marquet and younger painters like Flandrin, his decorative forcefulness has stimulated the Dutchman Kees Van Dongen, and, through Van Dongen, J. D. Fergusson, Anne Estelle Rice, and other Anglo-American painters. But the historical importance of Matisse is as a pioneer of the doctrine that actuality is unimportant to pictorial art, and as the introducer of 'shock tactics' into painting.

CHAPTER IV

THE ORIGIN OF CUBISM

Not having found either sufficiently beautiful women or instruction sufficiently enlightened, I have followed a certain idea *of beauty which formed itself in my own mind. Whether this idea has any merit as art, I know not; nevertheless, I am endeavouring to conceive it clearly and give it utterance.* RAPHAEL

In a work of art it is only the spirit which should be visible. The physical aspect is hidden and mysterious, and we must struggle to find it. GLEIZES

LIKE nearly all the labels which have been attached to modern art movements, the word 'Cubism' originated in the derisive phrase of a hostile critic. It dates from 1908 and was pronounced for the first time, according to M. Léonce Rosenberg, by a member of the Hanging Committee of the Salon des Indépendants. As a canvas by Georges Braque was being carried by, this person exclaimed, "*Encore des cubes! assez de cubisme!*" A journalist seized on the *mot* and spread it abroad, and the painter concerned, together with his associates, accepted the nickname and confessed themselves Cubists.

Mr Roger Fry has told us that the Post-Impressionist painters "do not seek to imitate form, but to create form...to make images which, by

their closely knit unity of texture, shall appeal to our disinterested and contemplative imagination.... The logical extreme of such a method," he admits, "would undoubtedly be the attempt to give up all resemblance to natural form, and to create a purely abstract language of form—a visual music."

Though Cézanne is put forward as the father of abstract painting, this doctrine was never professed by him. "I wished to copy nature," he said; "I could not. But I was satisfied when I had discovered that the sun, for instance, could not be reproduced, but that it must be represented by something else...by colour." In his desire to make objects look "solid and enduring" Cézanne in some paintings sharpened curves into angles and emphasized cubic forms (*cf.* Plate 8). His method of expressing the volumes of objects was perceived to be powerful and effective, and was seized upon by certain of the *Fauves*, who, desirous above all things of being forcible, elaborated their discovery into a dogma. This dogma received support not only by the example of his paintings, but also in a precept of Cézanne which was piously handed down to his disciples. "Nature can be expressed by the cube, the cone, and the cylinder," said the veteran master. "Anyone who can paint these simple forms can paint nature." Cézanne, we may

be sure, would have been shocked and pained could he have foreseen all that would be built on his innocent words, words which any art master might have used to encourage his class to persevere in the painting of geometrical still life. This well-meaning allusion to the simple geometry of nature was taken literally and seriously by a generation of artists too susceptible to theories. From it arose a philosophy of painting based on two dogmatic assertions and a fallacious conclusion.

When I used to visit Paris at the beginning of the present century my artist friends in the Latin Quarter would explain that what seemed strange to me in their pictures was due to my own slovenly habits of vision. If I suggested that shadows were grey and not purple they would say, "That is because you do not use your eyes"; and when we were walking along the boulevards they would compel me to study the shadows of the trees on the pavement, make me analyse the colour, and, usually, I discovered that they were right and I wrong. In short, they always justified their work by reference to the facts of vision.

But ten to a dozen years later I found that the young artists of Paris had totally altered their attitude toward art. All references to vision were impatiently brushed aside with the remark, "Yes

yes; but the important thing is not to paint what you see, but to paint what you feel." This doctrine appeared to me to be dangerous, the more so because it did contain more than a grain of truth. The expression of a painter's feelings does constitute a real and great quality in the work of a master, but—a master respects his subject as well as himself. My young friends in 1907 and 1908 shocked me by the extraordinary liberties they took with their subjects. But since it is impossible to argue about another person's feelings their work was immune from all save psychological criticism.

Another thing which amazed me was that these students, so intolerant of any reference to a commonplace of sight, were always amenable to a word or an idea. My friends spoke little of things seen; but they were full of ideas, full of theories. A new phrase was an inspiration, a new word a joy. One day a painter I knew accompanied a friend of his, a student of science, to the Sorbonne and there heard a lecture on mineralogy. He returned from an improving afternoon with a new word—*crystallization*. It was a magic word, destined to become a talisman of modern painting. Some nights later while sitting with some friends in the Closerie des Lilas, on the Boulevard Saint-

Michel, I incautiously let drop a confession that I admired the work of Velazquez. "Velazquez!" said the most advanced of our party promptly, "but he has no crystallization!" I was staggered, and with becoming humility I pleaded for enlightenment. It was then put to me, not as a scientific definition, but as an æsthetic dogma, that "All Secondary Forms arise from the Decrement of Particles from the Edges and Angles of Primitive Forms." A new theory of art was being constructed, based on the idea of the crystal being the *primitive form* of all things. Velazquez, I was given to understand, was a Secondary Painter because he employed rounded—that is to say, secondary—forms. A Primary Painter, I was told, would preserve sharpness in the edges of his planes and accentuate the angles of his volumes.

Inevitably the crystallographers found support for their new theory in the paintings of Cézanne, who in certain pictures, as I have mentioned above, had sharpened edges and accentuated angles in order to emphasize the volume, density, and weight of objects.

Pablo Picasso, the Spaniard, is commonly given credit for having invented Cubism; but, if I remember rightly, the Frenchman Georges Braque was first in the field with crystallization, and the

MOTHER AND BABE 84
Pablo Picasso

crystal theory certainly preceded Cubism. It was in the autumn of 1908, I think, that Braque presented to an amazed public his crystallized art, landscapes in which meadows were crumpled up into crisp, candy-like masses, marines in which every wave had an edge like a razor. What Braque was doing with landscape Picasso was doing with figures, and I hesitate to assign priority to either: it was a close thing between them.

The painters produced the paintings, and there speedily arose commentators to explain exactly what they were doing. During the next few months the philosophy of Cubism was repeatedly explained to me by zealous adherents to the new doctrine. "You see," they would say, as if the matter did not admit of argument, "Strength is Beauty." I would think to myself, "But what about a flower? Surely it is beautiful, and yet it is weak." But the professors of the new æsthetics disliked being interrupted when they were lecturing, and regardless of protests they would proceed: "And, obviously, a Straight Line is stronger than a Curve." "Is it obvious?" I asked myself. "What about an arch? Is it not one of the strongest of constructions?" But no, in many faiths there are some things which have to be accepted without questioning. These two articles had to be swallowed

whole, and then the merits of Cubism became clear and incontrovertible.

To restore the human form to its primary beauty and strength all that was necessary was to eliminate curved lines, and to reconstruct human faces and bodies in 'primary forms,' *i.e.*, octahedrons, dodecahedrons, six-sided prisms, or whatever other geometrical figure might be most suitable. This M. Picasso, followed by MM. Gleizes, Léger, Metzinger, and others proceeded to do, Picasso excelling all others in inventiveness as well as in the enamel-like quality of his pigment.

This was the first stage of Cubism. It was new as an æsthetic theory, but it was not altogether new as an experimental practice. Albrecht Dürer in some of his drawings had used cubic forms to give solidity to a head, and, what is still more interesting, a twelfth-century miniature of *Moses receiving the Tablets of the Law*, in the Vatican Octateuch No. 746, shows Mount Sinai represented as a cube. Oriental scholars have told me cubic forms are characteristic of early Iranian landscapes.

A later development of Picasso's art was not really Cubism: indeed, he explained to me in his own studio that he was aiming at a new realism. Everybody is aware that the human figure in Egyptian bas-reliefs and wall-paintings is never

LADY IN A MANTILLA 86
Pablo Picasso
Illustrating early stage of Cubism. See p. 86.

realized in its entirety. Each limb and member is given separately in the aspect most easily remembered: the face profile, the eye full-face, the shoulders turned square to the front, the legs and feet in profile. These memorized fragments are then put together to *suggest* the entire form of man. Picasso developed this principle, only he made the result far more difficult to understand by his simultaneous presentation of various aspects of fragments of the same object.

The early and very beautiful *Mother and Babe* (Plate 15), one of his so-called "Blue Series," indicates Picasso's perfectly normal point of departure. When I first met him at Paris in 1913 Picasso said not a word of abstraction, but claimed to be a realist. His contention then was that people were not like the portraits of Reynolds and Gainsborough, but that they were like *his* portraits. After passing through various stages in which he was attracted in turn by the art of Forain, Lautrec, Ingres, Gauguin, and Matisse, Picasso finally became obsessed by the volumes in Cézanne's paintings (*cf.* Plate 8). He abolished curves, sharpened the angles of planes, and laid the foundation of Cubism in his painting of the *Lady in a Mantilla* (Plate 16). Gifted with a fertility of invention that would have made his fortune had

he been an engineer—as perhaps he ought to have been—Picasso, from mere boredom with the past of painting, produced the 'new things' about which others theorized. No longer content with squaring and cubing forms, the ingenious complexity of his mind evolved a new vision of objects, and he proceeded to paint bewildering canvases in which he arbitrarily put together in one composition a number of sectional aspects. Still he maintained that he was a realist—*plus royaliste que le roi*—indeed, the only true realist in paint. It was not realism, he argued, to show merely *one* aspect of an object from one point of view: the reality included all possible aspects from all possible points of view. The business of the 'real realist' painter was to combine a selection of these aspects in his painting. Naturally the spectator who does not know the rules of the game finds these pictures like 'nothing on earth.' An example of this method of picture-making was Picasso's *Still Life: Glass and Pipe*, 1919 (Plate 17), exhibited at the Leicester Galleries in January 1921. In this we were shown bits of the outside, the inside, and middle of the glass, bits of the inside and outside of the bowl and mouthpiece of the pipe, a sample of the tobacco—only, on the Irish principle of making the riddle harder, in the

STILL LIFE: GLASS AND PIPE, 1919 88

Pablo Picasso

Synthetic Cubism. See p. 88.

picture the tobacco was shown not in any section of the pipe, but mixed up with pieces of glass—all arbitrarily grouped together in an order dictated solely by the fancy of the painter.

It is all magnificently wonderful, but is it art? As an intellectual pastime for experts in conic sections these paintings may have great merit—I have heard them described by an enthusiastic professor as expressions of the "poetry of mathematics." Not being a mathematician I confess I am blind to their inner beauty and can judge these paintings only by their surface qualities as decorations. When they are beautiful in colour and pattern I can enjoy them as I enjoy a Persian tile or a Turkey carpet—but not otherwise.

Though it is not necessary for every picture to tell a story it is imperative that it should communicate an emotion: otherwise it fails to be a work of art. Unless these ultra-Cubist paintings communicate an emotion they are merely works of ingenuity. The question whether these pictures do or do not communicate emotions is still in dispute, and can only be answered finally by Time. To most contemporary observers the experiment appears doomed to failure, because the human mind, as at present constituted, can no more take in at one and the same moment half a dozen

different aspects of objects than it can register accurately the meaning of half a dozen sentences spoken at the same time by half a dozen speakers. The orchestration of vision is not beyond the bounds of possibility; but it is not enough for the conductor to *claim* that he has produced harmony; it must be perceived and acknowledged by the audience.

Possibly that audience is now in process of formation and growth, though hitherto these puzzle-pictures have appealed only to a few super-subtle minds which delight in unravelling the mysterious. They are far too complicated to appeal to the general public, which, not unreasonably, demands clarity as an essential in any work of art. As an end in itself, abstract painting is apt to prove a *cul-de-sac* from which, sooner or later, all but the most bigoted adherents to the doctrine have to retrace their steps. Many have done so already, but their experimental wandering in geometrical alleys has not been in vain. As a disciplinary exercise in design and construction, Cubism has been immensely helpful and instructive to many talented painters. Braque, Herbin, Lhote, Metzinger, and others have found their way to a new kind of realism and have been reinvigorated and fortified by their bracing experience of Cubism.

LADY WITH A FAN 90

Pablo Picasso

First stage of Cubism. See p. 93.

Cubism may be regarded as a drastic medicine which twentieth-century art had to swallow as an antidote to the soft, 'fuzzy' mess of paint into which the baser sort of Impressionism tended to degenerate. The Cubist insistence on the third dimension was a necessary corrective to the simplifying decorators who worked in two dimensions only. On modern painting Cubism has had a good influence generally in so far as it has tended to tighten up design and to make painters attach greater importance to bulk, weight, volume, and recession.

One great merit in Cubist paintings ought not to escape attention. All of them have to be very carefully constructed. The construction, almost inevitably, is exceedingly rigid; but it is far better to have rigidity of construction in a picture than to have no construction at all.

Since its inception, little more than a dozen years ago, Cubism has been developed in so many different directions, and has taken so many different forms, that to-day it is a little difficult to say exactly what paintings are 'Cubist' and what not. Even so well-informed and careful a critic as Mr Jan Gordon, in his book *Modern French Painters*, seems a little uncertain whether there are six or eight distinct varieties of Cubism.

Collating the eight developments of Cubism which Mr Gordon gives on page 137 with the six stages of Cubism he illustrates on page 149, his ingenious analysis may briefly be summarized as follows:

I. "Cubic-realism."
II. "Nature reduced to cubic pattern."
III. "Superimposition of several points of view to indicate total mental conception as opposed to partial direct vision. Fourth dimensionalism."
IV. "Pictures created as *memoria*, objects and abstract design intermingled."
V. "Flat abstract design." "Reduction of painting to two dimensions; space suggestions eliminated."
VI. "Spatial abstract design." "Development of pure pattern and colour containing space suggestion."

This list, I fancy, includes everything that can claim to be considered as Cubist painting; for the strange experiments made with tramcar tickets, bits of wood, coloured paper, fabrics, etc., if anything, were certainly not painting. Adopting this classification as expedient, if not final, it will be salutary to glance briefly at the characteristics of each class.

I and II. Personally I feel that the distinction

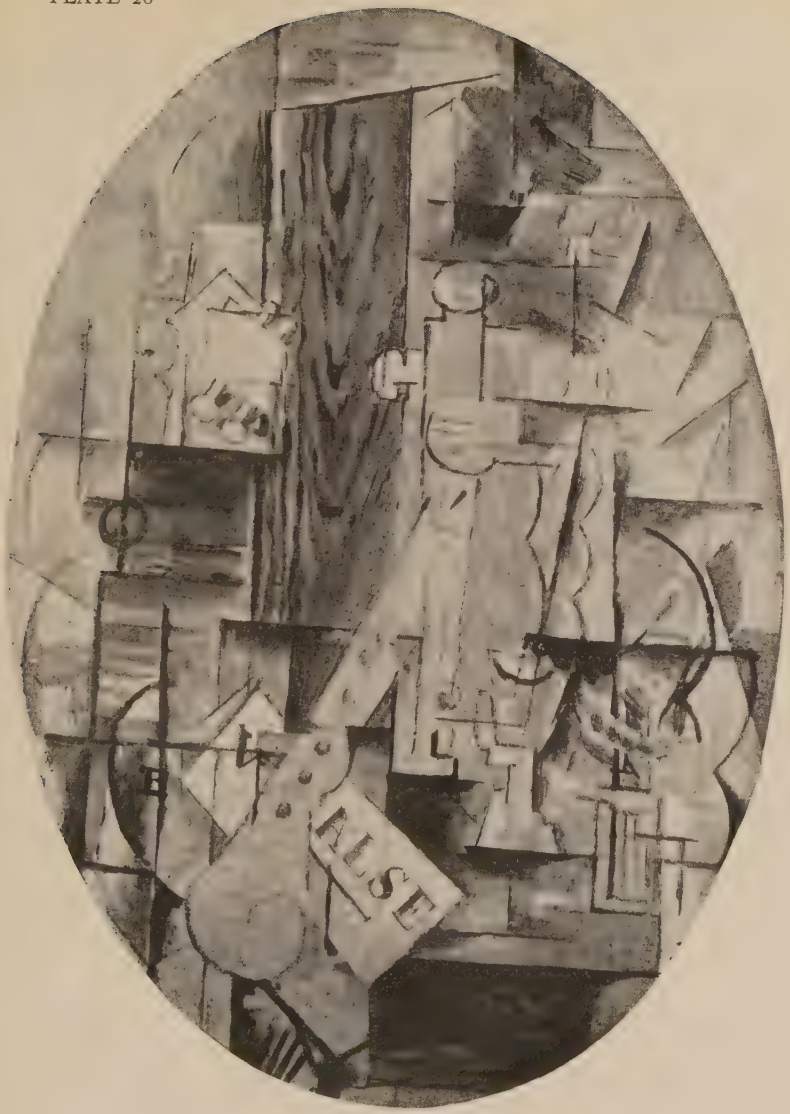
HARLEQUIN PLAYING A GUITAR 92
Pablo Picasso
Showing superimposition of divers aspects. See p. 93.

between these two classes is one of degree rather than kind, the method begun in the first being merely carried a little farther in the second. We may accept Picasso's *Lady with a Fan* (Plate 18) as an example of "cubic-realism," and his *Lady in a Mantilla* (Plate 16) as an example of "nature reduced to cubic pattern." By comparing these two works carefully the reader will get some idea of the first step made in the Cubist's Progress.

III. From what has been said already no difficulty should be experienced in identifying Picasso's *Harlequin playing a Guitar* (Plate 19) as an example of the third class of Cubist painting. In the upper half of the picture the superimposition of profiles and full-faces is obvious, while if the lower half is a little more complicated even a casual glance reveals that the arms of the armchair and the fragments of the guitar are painted from "several points of view to indicate total mental conception."

IV. The shuffling about of arbitrarily selected fragments of an object seen from several points of view is carried a stage farther in Braque's *Still Life*, 1912 (Plate 20), which may be taken as an example of the fourth class. Mr Gordon explains this kind of memory-picture by saying that the artist "will brood over a still-life arrangement, and will later on reconstruct an image of that which

formed in the strange recesses of his mind during this contemplation." The superimpositions in this painting are obvious, but at a first glance they appear to consist merely of tiles or sheets of metal on either side of a beam of wood, and a severe mental effort is required before we can begin to identify certain shapes as fragments of musical instruments. But it may be doubted whether Braque desires us to make this desperate attempt at identification. He would prefer us not to bother our heads about trifles which were of use to him as a starting-point, but to give our attention to the result. What he aims at is to produce "a new sort of unity, a lyricism which issues wholly from the means employed." Braque, who, whatever his theories may be worth, never fails to show admirable taste and refinement in his colour, is perhaps a little guilty of practising "Art for Art's sake." His works, whether we can understand them or not, appeal to a sensitive spectator by their fine craftsmanship, and the one emotion never wanting in them is the painter's immense respect for his material, which he handles with so much love, patience, and care. Braque is so much in love with paint as paint and colour as colour that he distrusts his own emotionalism, and has accordingly invented something approaching to a course of



STILL LIFE, 1912 94

Georges Braque

Abstract *memoria*. See pp. 93–96.

disciplinary gymnastics as exercises preliminary to the construction of a picture. "I love the Rule which corrects the Emotion," he has said. Mr Gordon has labelled Braque "the Quaker of Cubism," because he considers his work 'sombre.' Personally I should call Braque's favourite colour-schemes of dark greens, fawns, white, and black restrained rather than sombre, for they are rich as well as exquisitely refined and harmonious. Braque does not confine himself to abstract paintings, but has produced during recent years many still-life paintings in which the objects are clearly recognizable, but I think a knowledge of his origin is extremely helpful to a better understanding of his paintings whether abstract or concrete. Georges Braque is the son of a contractor for house-painting, and during his childhood he watched his father's workmen mixing their colours and particularly observed them engaged on the tasks of 'graining' and 'marbling.' What he then loved to see and learned how to do inserts itself continually in his work, hence the 'beam' which is so often in his eye. As he watched his father's workmen imitating wood or marble, so he must often have seen them employed on lettering, and I suspect the memory of this is really responsible for his tendency to introduce letters and written words into his paintings.

Others—and possibly Braque himself—might justify the intrusion of print into 'memory-pictures' on other grounds. All classes of Cubist paintings aim at expressing *ideas* rather than *aspects*, and it may be argued that, so great is the power of the printed word, if you desire to convey that the tune being played on a guitar is a waltz, then the most concise and forcible way in which a French artist can express that idea in paint is to give the word 'VALSE.' Whether the idea of a waltz played on a guitar is a suitable subject for a painting is another matter altogether, and about this arguments are futile. We have yet to consider what is the "rule that corrects the emotion," but it will be more convenient to approach this when considering the last two classes of Cubist paintings.

V and VI. The difference between flat abstract design and spatial abstract design requires little elucidation, the first being marked by insistence on two dimensions only, the second being characterized by emphasis on the third dimension only. To arrange a series of flat planes behind one another is to emphasize two dimensions rather than to express the third, and therefore it is permissible to accept Léger's *The Mirror* (Plate 21) as an example of Class V. The design is essentially flat. Braque's *Still Life*, 1919 (Plate 22), on the other

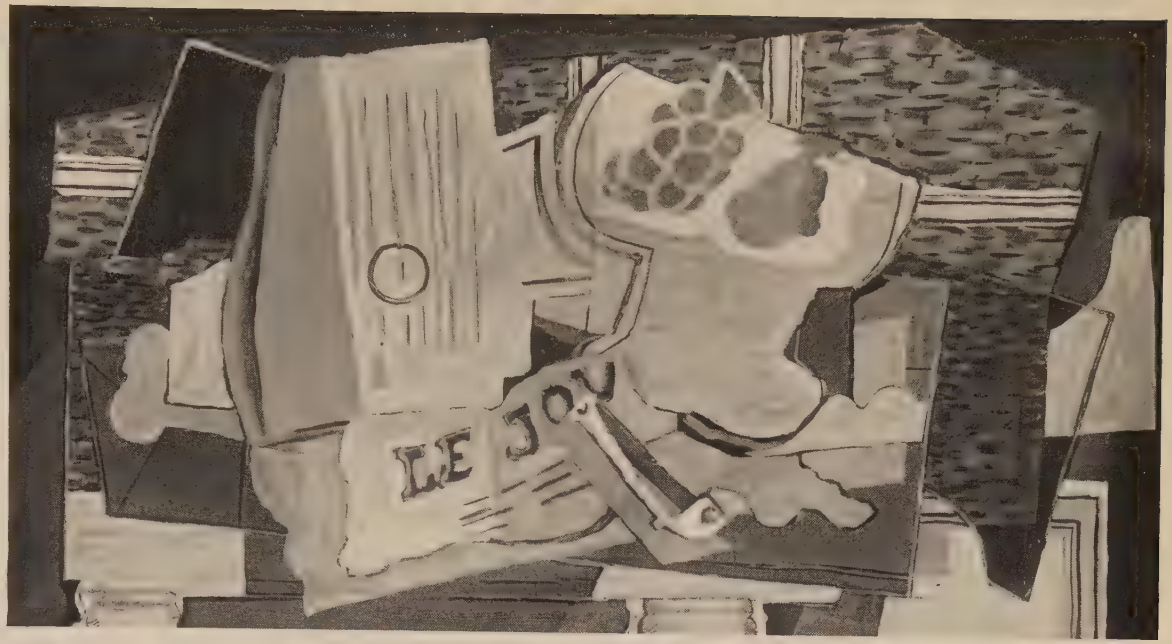
THE MIRROR
Fernand Léger

hand, is not flat: we are conscious of a certain roundness even in the clay pipe in the foreground. There is a sense of recession not only in a series of planes, but in an object which (according to Class V) should be in one plane. Consequently this picture is 'spatial' and belongs to Class VI.

It may be said that the arm and woman's back in Léger's *The Mirror* are also not flat. I admit the impeachment. *The Mirror* is not a strictly pure example of its class, but it is sufficiently flat to serve the purpose of my argument and is further an interesting example of a variety of philosophic Cubism. Here an endeavour is made to state pictorially a qualitative and quantitative analysis of a woman's toilet. To the philosophic painter who pierces below the surface of things it is clear that the 'big noise' in a woman's toilet is, not the woman, but the mirror in which she sees herself. Therefore in his painting the philosopher presents us with 60 per cent. of Mirror to about 25 per cent. of Woman. The remaining 15 per cent. is filled in with her washstand dressing-table, only to make it a little more amusing this is seen vertically from above while all else is viewed horizontally. But why, it may be asked, is the mirror presented as a series of half-mirrors in different planes, and why is one tilted at an angle? The

answer is because the primary function of painting, according to a Cubist doctrine, is "to animate a plane surface." Now at last we approach the "rule that corrects emotion."

Of all the Cubist painters M. Albert Gleizes is the most strict in his adherence to flat abstract design, and he is a most eloquent and persuasive writer on the subject of Cubism. His monograph *La Peinture et ses Lois: Ce qui devait sortir du Cubisme* is full of acute and true criticisms, and though we may dissent from his conclusions we must admire the penetration shown in his historical survey of painting, and his arguments will be followed with interest. M. Gleizes is, of course, an out-an-out opponent of 'illusionism.' He attracts sympathy by maintaining at the outset that painting is not an end, but a means—a means of "registering, teaching, and recalling." To pretend that a picture has depth when it has only length and breadth is to deny the very condition of its being and to open the door to deceit and falsehood. M. Gleizes, then, demands the recognition of the flat surface as the first objective reality of painting. This surface is static, is material: the business of the painter is to make it dynamic, to vivify the matter with mind and spirit. The animation of the flat surface is accomplished by



STILL LIFE, 1919
Georges Braque

making space rhythmical. Rhythm M. Gleizes defines as "the consequence of the continuity of a certain phenomenon which reproduces itself under similar conditions, at variable or invariable intervals, according to a progression established on a mathematical basis." Equilibrium is the first symptom of rhythm, obtained by the correspondence of equal quantities. Accordingly it is maintained that space and rhythm are the two first principles, the two vital conditions necessary to the creation of a work of art. In any picture space, by its limitation of surfaces, conveys a sense of the finite: rhythm brings to it an idea of infinity.

So far M. Gleizes' theory appears to me unassailable, but when he shows how his theory should be put into practice I confess I have doubts. To explain his meaning M. Gleizes makes use of diagrams, and to master the system the reader should refer to the series of diagrams in his book; but I will endeavour to do justice to his teaching, as well as I can, while limiting myself to two simple diagrams.

In Fig. 1 ABCD is a rectangular plane. By drawing within it a series of smaller planes the idea of advance or recession may be conveyed without denying the objective reality of the flat surface. These planes are capable of lateral or

rotatory movements. We may begin to animate this flat surface by setting two planes revolving, *e.g.*, EFGH and IKLM, but since our object is to create a picture, and so rhythm must be present, we must be careful not to tilt one plane farther to

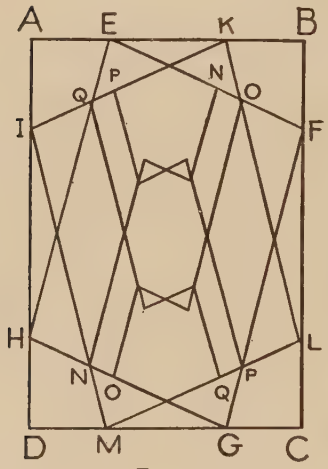


FIG. 1

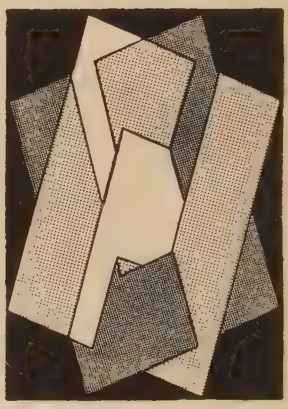


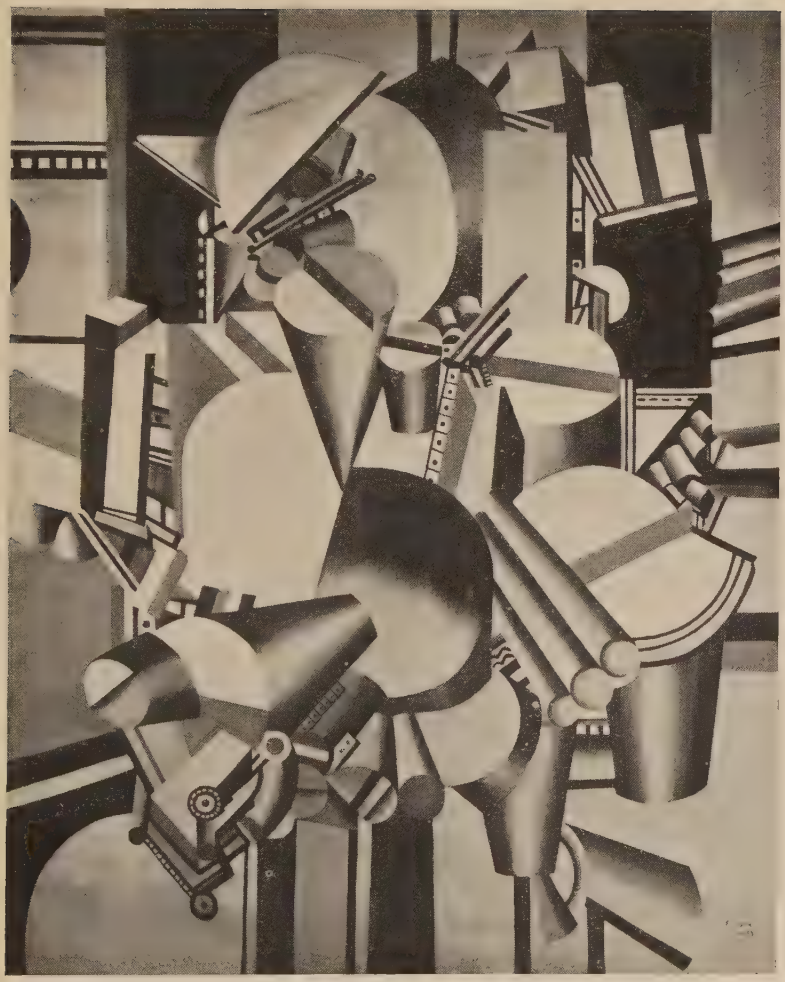
FIG. 2

the left than we have tilted the other to the right. Next, since it is impossible to keep the *ego* of the artist entirely outside the work of creation, the two smaller planes are arbitrarily divided by the zigzag lines NN, OO, PP, QQ. M. Gleizes gives no explanation why these lines should be drawn, but from his previous argument it is clear that, however drawn, they must exactly correspond:

otherwise rhythm would be lost. If in one plane the line NN be drawn from the top, then the corresponding line OO must be drawn from the bottom; and if the plane rotating to the right be divided by the lines NN, OO, then the plane rotating to the left must be similarly divided by the lines PP, QQ. The framework for our elementary exercise in pictorial creation is now complete, too complete. All that remains is for the artist, according to his pleasure, to eliminate certain lines which his sensibility divines are superfluous, and to fill up with colours or tones the planes or fractions of planes which remain (Fig. 2). We have now done two things: (*a*) we have "disengaged certain principles in the conjugation of rotatory and lateral movements"; and (*b*) we have achieved the creation of "a spatial and rhythmic plastic organism." Suppose that instead of a simple plane we had set the flat image of a guitar or a wineglass rotating and had dealt in a similar manner with either of these objects; it will probably be admitted that in the "plastic organism" finally created few traces would be found of the original guitar or wineglass. To a superficial observer it would seem as if the methods advocated by M. Gleizes are nothing more than a device for obtaining patterns: but I imagine the artist would

contest this view and endeavour to persuade us that his manner of painting was intended to reveal laws of the universe. But it makes severe demands on the goodwill of the most sympathetic critic to maintain that the nice equilibrium of planes revolving in contrary directions ought to recall to the beholder that rhythm in nature which is responsible for night and day, summer and winter, and the course of the planets round the sun. Nevertheless, the fact that certain artists are endeavouring to express in painting something of their feelings about these high and mighty things should of itself persuade us to be lenient and hesitate to deny that, after all, something may come of their first steps on a new road.

In justice to abstract art in general I feel I ought to say that I have met men of high intelligence and learning who have sincerely maintained that now they have accustomed themselves to abstract painting they "cannot live" with representative pictures, the interest in which is too quickly exhausted. I give their evidence for what it is worth, conscious that this argument is always open to the reply that a man can accustom himself to mild tobacco or to strong tobacco and that the mere fact proves nothing. It is more to the point, perhaps, to state that almost without exception the



MECHANICAL ELEMENTS 102
Fernand Léger

men I have known to be genuinely attracted by abstract painting have been men intensely interested in mathematics or engineering.

Before leaving this subject it may be mentioned that several Cubist painters are attracted and have been influenced by machinery. Conceiving of beauty as "fitness expressed," they find the triumphs of engineering to be truly beautiful, and one of the most distinguished collectors of Cubist paintings in Paris remarked to me some time ago that he considered the greatest works of art produced in our day to be our railway locomotives. Gleizes himself, while denying that its aspects should be copied or interpreted, admits that modern industry may be a source of inspiration to an artist. If we live in a mechanical age it is not inappropriate that mechanism should play a part in our painting. The idea of machinery is still so new to us that bolts, screws, pipes, funnels, and cylinders seem to most of us strange material from which a painter may fashion a work of art. M. Fernand Léger, who is profoundly interested in mechanism, thinks differently, and his recent painting *Mechanical Elements* (Plate 23) is an expression of the faith that is in him. But since M. Léger, one of the original Cubists, presents us here with clearly recognizable objects organized

into a pattern, I do not see how his painting could properly be described as either 'abstract' or 'Cubist.' It is, I submit, clearly realistic in character, only it is a realism derived from new material. Even his colour is new, scrupulously clean, but inclined to hardness. The best idea I can give to an English reader of the colour in a painting by Léger—or Metzinger (see Plate 24)—is to say that it resembles a newly painted London General motorbus. Apart from Picasso—whose taste is often vulgar—and Braque, the French Cubist and abstract painters generally pitch their work in a much higher key of colour than has yet found acceptance in England. Further it should be noted that just as the Cubists have developed a new sense of form having little relation to normal appearances, so also they use colour with little regard to any representative function. M. Léonce Rosenberg in his stimulating and helpful monograph *Cubisme et Tradition* pointed out that while the Primitives constructed their pictures with "coloured forms" the Cubists have "separated the colour from the form and found in this division two elements instead of one for the construction of their plastic world." Fig. 2 on page 100 suggests how colour can be used independently of form in a Cubist picture.

The influence of Cubism has been far-reaching.

THE RED BRIDGE
Jean Metzinger

It is spread abroad over the hoardings of Paris and may be detected in the posters Mr E. McKnight Kauffer has designed for the London Electric Railways and other English advertisers. It has affected furniture and women's dress and has fruitfully inspired both theatre-decoration and the drama. It is superfluous to point out that the Robot play *R.U.R.*, which had so great a success all over Europe, was directly based on ideas expressed in Cubist art. Its influence on English painting I reserve for discussion in a later chapter, but it is beyond question that Cubism is a world force. It has been most beneficial in quarters where its influence is least obvious. The Parisian pioneers of Cubism have never set themselves up as models who must be closely followed. The most gifted of them modestly disclaim to be anything more than the Primitives of a new art, and their chief concern is to lay soundly foundations on which others after them may build.

The building has already begun. Every year it is becoming more and more clear and certain that twentieth-century painting is evolving a new style and a new vision. That style has, to a great extent, been formed by Cubism, which is the first great constructive movement in modern art since Impressionism. *Fauvisme* was a reaction: Cubism is an advance. Its theory and philosophy are of

doubtful value, but its discipline is excellent and it has prepared the way for a new vision of the world and the things that are. That vision is stern, to some it appears hard; but, though wholly devoid of sentimentality, it is not altogether without tenderness. It is a vision that pierces to fundamentals and states the bedrock of humanity and life with crystal clarity and granite-like obduracy.

Compelled by stress of war to discard preconceived ideas, to meet hitherto inconceivable demands, and to reorganize completely all material resources, the younger generation has unconsciously freed itself from petty prejudices, and is less disposed than its forefathers were to yield servile obedience to precedent. A tremendous and terrible expansion in experience of life has prepared artists to create, and a public to receive and welcome, a new art embodying a new vision. Far from being convinced that there is "nothing new under the sun," we are wondering whether it be not equally true that *everything under the sun is new*.

A world pregnant with the burden of this thought can surely look forward to a new Renaissance. But it will be a rebirth of the old Gothic ideas of energy and aspiration far more than a restatement of the classical ideals of obedience to orders and serene acceptance.

CHAPTER V

FUTURISM AND EXPRESSIONISM

It is better to try to go forward a step at the risk of making a mistake than to stay dully where one is with the surety of being right. "*Action*"

What is that Asiatic ideal that I find in Dostoevsky, the effect of which will be, as I see it, to overwhelm Europe? Briefly, it is the rejection of every strongly held Ethic and Moral in favour of a comprehensive Laissez-faire.

HERMANN HESSE

I

THE complexity of Neo-Impressionist painting was child's-play in comparison with the entanglement of Picasso's puzzle pictures—Picasso, who has probably done more to unsettle artists than any living man. His sectional representation of divers aspects of different objects was developed, with an added emphasis on the expression of movement, by a group of Italian painters known as the Futurists. Though there is evidence that Gino Severini developed his own style independently—as Segantini did of Monet—the majority of the Futurists have been more or less influenced by the Cubists.

As regards colour, the Futurists accepted the divisionism and complementarism of the Neo-Impressionists, but in the rendering of form they

sought to introduce new principles: "universal dynamism must be rendered in painting as a dynamic sensation"; "movement and light destroy the materiality of bodies." With the pen of a skilled journalist (Signor Marinetti) at their disposal, they justified extraordinary practices by sonorous phrases; with superb assurance they endeavoured to convert painting from an art of space to an art of time, painting the world in a whirl as it might have appeared to the rider on Mr Wells's Time Machine.

The first Cubists specialized in the third dimension; the Futurists went one better and specialized in the fourth. They possessed what no other body of Post-Impressionists had—a clarion-voiced, magnificently energetic, inspired coiner of phrases, poet, and man of action, who served them nobly as a trumpeter. Whatever the Futurists painted, Marinetti explained how right and wonderful it was, and although nobody ever understood one word of his explanation all who heard him were filled with respect for Futurism by reason of the magic of his personality and the sonorous obscurantism of his eloquence. Since Vasari died no body of artists has ever had so good a publicity agent.

The simplest commonplace became a miracle

in the hands of Marinetti. When a Futurist painted a man seated he recognized the profound truth that, although we could not see it, the back of the chair was there. He also realized that, however long the man sat, a time would come when he would arise (or be removed), and then the back of the chair would become visible. These things being so, why not paint the back of the chair although, for the moment, it was hidden by the man's body? Italy being then a comparatively free country, the Futurist carried out his plan and carefully painted an adequate section of the chair-back in the middle of the man's body. The painting accomplished, Signor Marinetti beats a big drum, ascends the platform, and announces to a stupefied audience that the Futurists alone have perceived and expressed in art "*the plastic interpenetration of matter.*" The rest of his speech is drowned in the tumultuous cheering which ensues.

Again, a Futurist painter observes that in order to scratch his head a man has to lift his arm and in so doing drags his arm through an infinite number of horizontal planes. It occurs to him that a man scratching his head would make a splendid subject for a Futurist painting. In order that the spectator may fully realize the series of attitudes in space which the man's arm occupies,

from the moment his hand leaves his trouser-pocket till the second when it touches his head, the Futurist paints eight, nine, or ten arms, this multiplicity of arms being intended to express the movement of *one* arm in *time*. Again Marinetti ascends the rostrum and, greatly moved, with the perspiration streaming from his brow, he heatedly demands whether anyone ever beheld before so noble an expression of "*dynamic decomposition*."

Generally speaking, the Futurists were particularly successful in the rendering of movement, but they secured this by their adroit use of diagonals and slanting lines far more than by "dynamic decomposition." The gaiety and sense of action in Severini's *Bal Tabarin*—painted in 1912—owes far more to the former than to the latter. In his earlier war-pictures Mr Nevinson made fruitful use of this element in Futurism to express the movement of troops on the march.

The attempt to express time pictorially in one picture has had more uncertain results. Painting from its nature is an art of space. "A Journey from Milan to Paris" does not appear to be a hopeful subject for a picture, and the jumbling together on one canvas of fragments of Milan Cathedral and Notre-Dame, scraps of railway-carriages, trams, taxicabs, arcades, and boulevards,

A Lady and her Dog 110

Giacomo Balla

An example of dynamic decomposition. See p. 111.

does not convey an idea of time, or of anything save mental and topographical confusion.

The most successful application of "dynamic decomposition" which I have seen is Giacomo Balla's *A Lady and her Dog* (Plate 25), which is really amusing and does suggest the whirling in space and time of the dog's lead and the pitter-patter of his own paws and of his mistress's feet. Whether this be good painting I know not; but it is certainly good fun.

But Signor Balla is capable of far higher things than this descent to the comedy of little things. He is the author of the one Futurist painting I have seen which I unreservedly respect and admire. This is a landscape-shaped panel with a ground of deep sapphire blue on which gold and silver spheres, carefully placed with an eye to decorative effect, appear to be revolving rapidly and shooting off sparks. It is exceedingly beautiful in colour and pattern and would make a magnificent frieze. But it is not only ornamental; it is grandly significant. Signor Balla calls this picture *Centrifugal Force* (Plate 26), and that is what it does express. Other Futurist pictures have amused me; they have given me the pleasure one derives from seeing a good farce: they have been funny without being vulgar. But Signor Balla's work is profoundly serious.

How far painting can express the abstract is a question that the future must decide; but, if legitimately it may be attempted, then Signor Balla has shown us a way in which it can be done with dignity and appropriateness. And why should not the attempt be made? How far nobler a subject for an artist is centrifugal force than the anecdotes about children and animals which delighted Victorian visitors to the Royal Academy. The example of Signor Balla proves that a concrete painting of an abstract subject may result in a triumph; the abstract painting of concrete subjects has never yet given us anything a quarter so good.

II

The kaleidoscopic paintings of the Italian Futurists were matched at Munich by the Expressionism of the Russo-Polish artist Wassily Kandinsky, who argued that painting, like music, should be able to give emotional pleasure without any appeal to association of material ideas. The contention is logical once we abandon representation as an indispensable element in picture-making. But Kandinsky goes a step farther, and claims that his abstract paintings are not mere dream-patterns,

CENTRIFUGAL FORCE
Giacomo Balla

but have a meaning for the initiated, in that they are based on the psychological effects on the observer of various lines and colours. These effects, however, are by no means definitely established. They are still a subject for speculation; and, till they are fixed by the common consent of mankind, experiments in the "art of spiritual harmony" will be uncertain and inconclusive.

The state of European painting in 1914 was curiously interesting both to the historian and to the psychologist. During the first decade of the twentieth century, as we have seen, the logical development of centuries by masters who, laboriously and reverently, had conquered province after province of nature's fairyland was amazingly interrupted by group after group of revolutionary artists. From Giotto in the early fourteenth century to Claude Monet and Pissarro at the close of the nineteenth the art of the Great Masters had been firmly anchored to nature. They had had many and various aims, but truth of vision had always been one, whether it was the true appearance of forms, the true effect of distance, the true subtlety of light and shade, the true glory of sunrise and sunset, or the true tints of prismatic colour in shadows. Artists painted what they saw, or imagined could be seen, till the experimentalists of the twentieth

century began preaching the new gospel that artists should paint not what they beheld, but what they felt or thought about.

From about 1900 down to the outbreak of the Great War the art world was deluged with theories and 'isms.' Impressionism, the last of the natural progressive movements in painting—for its essence was the rendering of the true colour of prismatic sunshine and the exact tint of colour in shadows—was succeeded by Post-Impressionism, Cubism, Expressionism, Futurism, Vorticism, and what not. All these, it has been shown, were reactionary movements, the earlier ones reacting to archaic forms, the later ones tending toward an abstract ideal that would reduce a picture to the intellectual level of a Turkish carpet or a design for chintz. They would seem wholly unrelated but for one significant fact. However different Post-Impressionist pictures may be in other respects, nearly all have one quality in common, and that is *violence*.

Art, we are told, offers two pleasures: the pleasure of recognition, and the pleasure of surprise. Of the former Post-Impressionist pictures may give little; but they are lavish in surprises, surprises which often take the form of a smack in the eye. This violence may be traced to two causes.

PLAN OF CAMPAIGN 114
P. Wyndham Lewis

The first is a determination to state an extreme case in an extreme manner. The distortion of form in *Fauviste* pictures is partly a subconscious expression of a deep-seated, prehistoric hatred of naturalistic representation, partly the kind of extravagant exaggeration in which some children and young people indulge. Secondly, the violence in Post-Impressionism may be construed as an expression of the political hatred and industrial unrest which agitated Europe during the first decade of the twentieth century and culminated in the War and the Russian Revolution.

Is it not profoundly significant that paintings based on war, and nothing but war, were being painted all over Europe early in the spring of 1914? In England Mr P. Wyndham Lewis, whose Vorticism was a mixture of all the other 'isms,' was painting a series of abstract designs with titles taken from military text-books, and with patterns derived from the diagrams of battles in history-books. His *Plan of Campaign* (Plate 27), exhibited in June 1914 at the *salon* of the Allied Artists' Association in London, was an entirely original creation. In this strange abstract painting the parallel lines and blocks stand for brigades and divisions of contending armies. The heavy blocks in the top right-hand corner are intended

to express the extended left wing of one army which has turned, outflanked, and is now "falling like a ton of bricks" to crush and disintegrate the right wing of the other army. Conceivably this picture may be held to express a kind of savage exultation on the part of the victorious tactician, but it is not so much emotional as an ingenious intellectual exercise in thought-expression and pattern-building.

Still earlier, in the winter of 1913–14, the Russo-Polish painter Kandinsky had produced violently coloured canvases in which the trained eye could perceive distorted traces of cannon and puffs of smoke (see Plate 28). This quasi-subterranean interest on the part of painters in the appurtenances of war, coupled with an extraordinary rage for violence in the presentation of normal subjects, escaped the attention of most professional art critics. It was recognized, however, by Sir Michael Sadler, who in the winter of 1915 delivered at Leeds a lecture on "Premonitions of War in Modern Painting." In this lecture he stated that he had been so impressed by Kandinsky's work that he had asked the artist whether he had any clear vision of the imminence of war in Europe. The painter replied that he had not actually foreseen the outbreak of hostilities, but

COMPOSITION 116
Wassily Kandinsky

he had been conscious of "an immense conflict of forces in the spiritual world," and his endeavour had been to record that consciousness in his pictures.

When it came to putting his theories into practice Kandinsky could always be detected basing his abstract compositions on *concrete* things. I analysed one of his 'abstract' pictures, which Sir Michael Sadler had in his possession very early in 1914. I discovered that the pattern was based on an artillery gun, on puffs of smoke, on houses falling to pieces. The painter maintains that all he had in his mind when he painted the picture was "a conflict of spiritual forces": I do not doubt that he was speaking the truth, as far as he knew it. But his painting meant *war*! If this is not prophecy, what is?

Often and often in the history of painting the value of a work has been not what the artist did *consciously*, but what he did *unconsciously*. The artists of Byzantium little knew that they were expressing in their paintings and mosaics the fettering of Christianity in the chains of Greek imperialism. Frans Hals never realized that his swaggering portrait-groups expressed the jubilation of a little republic that was regaining civic and religious liberty by throwing off the yoke of the mighty empire of Spain. El Greco did not set out

deliberately to depict the agony and torment of the Counter-Reformation—but that is what he did. All paintings of value to the historian and historical critic express in one way or another the reaction of the artist's mind and being to the conditions and ideas of his time.

Often these Post-Impressionist painters "know not what they do." A painter may be a staunch Conservative and yet unconsciously express Bolshevism in his art; while another may preach red revolution, advocate 'direct action'—and paint harmless little watercolours showing a timid acceptance of middle-class conventions! Whatever may be their ultimate value as art, the Post-Impressionist paintings of the last twenty years are a complete index to the psychology of Europe during one of the most momentous periods of her history. The opponents of Post-Impressionism have repeatedly maintained that the work of these *Fauviste* and Expressionist artists is anarchical in character. It is. That is what makes it profoundly interesting both as art and as a human document. However strange, queer, and violent these pictures may be they express a real thing. They are not like the pictures of the late Marcus Stone and others, which express nothing but an artificial romance and a sham sentimentality.

The paintings of Matisse, Kandinsky, etc., are anarchical as the novels of Dostoieffsky are anarchical; and to say that these paintings are "not art" is like saying that *The Brothers Karamazoff* is not a novel. Both the novel and the pictures express the thought of an age, an age whose great thinkers have taught the *intelligentsia* of all nations that it is the duty of each man to be a law unto himself and to be the sole judge of his actions and conduct. With these ideas in the air, all over Europe and all over the world, it is idle to blame artists for giving pictorial and plastic expression to a philosophy that is running like lava through the blood of humanity.

Post-Impressionist pictures deserve the attention of all thoughtful minds and students of history because these works have been produced not "for Art's sake," but for Life's sake. Whether their opinions be right or wrong, whether their works be inspired or misguided, we cannot ignore writers and artists who have captured the ears and eyes of the public. Whether *we* personally like or dislike their writings, their paintings, and their sculpture is altogether beside the point: what they have done is a historical fact.

Coming events cast their shadows before them on the field of art. A sinister violence and

subterranean unrest became manifest in European painting long before it exploded in European politics and precipitated the War. Abroad, and slightly even in England, the 'wild men' of painting had betrayed in form and colour that spirit of greed and merciless aggression which eventually provoked Armageddon. The art of France was profoundly affected by this invading spirit; on British painting it touched but lightly, and long months of war elapsed before it became apparent that a new art was rising. "It is through the study of art," wrote March Phillipps, "that we enter into the thoughts of mankind." *Fauviste*, Cubist, Futurist, and Expressionist paintings alike reveal the terrible thoughts that surged through Europe in 1910–14.

Of the numerous art manifestations, from Orphéism to Dadaism, which followed Cubism at Paris, it is unnecessary to speak: they were all shortlived and most of them barren. Only one other 'ism' had anything of its own to give to modern art: this was Vorticism, the British blend of Cubism, Futurism, and Expressionism, which, despite the erratic temperament of its brilliant but wayward leader, Wyndham Lewis, has left an indelible impress on modern British art.

CHAPTER VI

POST-IMPRESSIONISM IN ENGLAND

In France, the painter is a workman of art at the service of the man of society. In England, the painter is a society man who practises painting as an amateur. ÉLIE FAURE

BRITISH painting, protected by national conservatism, has been slow to be affected by Continental art-movements. Neo-Impressionism never gained many adherents on the English side of the Channel, though one of the most exquisite of its exponents, Mr Lucien Pissarro, has dwelt and worked among us for a quarter of a century. Mr Walter Sickert freed himself from the influence of Whistler by contact with the French Impressionists and, retaining their mosaic method of painting (*le procédé par la tache*), but limiting his colour to the shimmering beauties of dim light, has achieved a unique and lasting position among the masters of *intimisme*. He and the eldest son of Camille Pissarro may be said to have had issue in the delicate and vibrating pictures of the late Spencer Gore and Harold Gilman. Mr Charles Ginner, sometimes erroneously bracketed with Gore and Gilman as a "pupil of Sickert," owes nothing to that master. His distinctive style, which combines the fervour of a Van Gogh with

the rectitude of a Crivelli, was already formed when he first came to England from Paris in 1910.

The reaction against Impressionism, which hardly any of the British elder artists (except Mr Clausen) troubled to adopt, may be traced in the figure-paintings of Mr Augustus John and in the landscapes of Sir C. J. Holmes. Both show the same tendency toward simplification. But it was not till after the first Post-Impressionist exhibition at the Grafton Galleries in 1910 that any considerable number of British artists were affected by the movements which had already agitated Paris.

The younger generation hastened to make up for lost time, and in a year or two London had painters as 'wild' as any in Paris. But, whereas the Frenchmen knew very well against what they were reacting, few of the English did, and in their ignorance they imitated the defects of painters whose excellencies they did not understand. A French painter like M. Maurice Denis knows that "it is puerile to glorify Cézanne for his negligences and imperfections." He also knows that, notwithstanding them, "such is the power of his invention and the sincerity of his gesture that his ungainliness scarcely disturbs us and usually disappears in the general harmony." The British

imitators of Cézanne have been successful in reproducing the ungainliness: but they reveal little power of invention, and we suspect the sincerity of their gesticulations.

Intellectually incapable of appreciating the simple fact that Cézanne acquired merit as a landscape painter by being true to himself and true to the Southern land in which he lived, his foolish imitators in England pride themselves on painting Yorkshire and Surrey as if these were Provence. The exhibitions of the London Group are never wanting in canvases whose painters plainly show that they have seen the pictures of Cézanne—and misunderstood them completely. The "soup of the soup" ladled out to us by these pictorial cooks is little appetizing to those whose palates have been trained in Paris. Little is to be hoped for from the tame *Fauves* of London, but there are grounds for believing that good has come from another group, known before the War as the Vorticists.

Vorticism as a creed needs no lengthy consideration: it was an ingenious British blend of Cubism, Futurism, and Expressionism which obtained some publicity through the irrepressible energy of Mr Wyndham Lewis. The early paintings and drawings by members of this group showed complete disregard for normal appearances,

but they were never meaningless and often displayed genuine inventiveness. Mr Nevinson, who once exhibited with the group though never a confessed Vorticist, gave a vibrating impression of the sensations of a 'strap-hanger' in a London Tube; Mr Wyndham Lewis in his drawing *Enemy of the Stars* invented an inhuman creature and solved the problem of its balance. In 1913 and the early part of 1914 it was not easy to see where all this was leading, but it was clear that Mr Lewis, together with Messrs Bomberg, Roberts, and Wadsworth, had constructed a new machinery for picture-making. The use to which this was to be put was only revealed by the War.

In one of his charming essays the late Mr Clutton Brock referred to a growing belief that man is a machine and "should be conscious of the fact that he is one." Jacob Epstein expressed his consciousness of the fact in his statue *The Rock Drill* (Plate 29), but before August 1914 the masses were not familiar with this belief, and his sculpture consequently was not understood. If he had exhibited it a few years later with the title *The Prussian War God* it might have been as popular and universally accepted as the War paintings of Mr Nevinson. For, after all, the power that forces men to become automata obedient to orders is

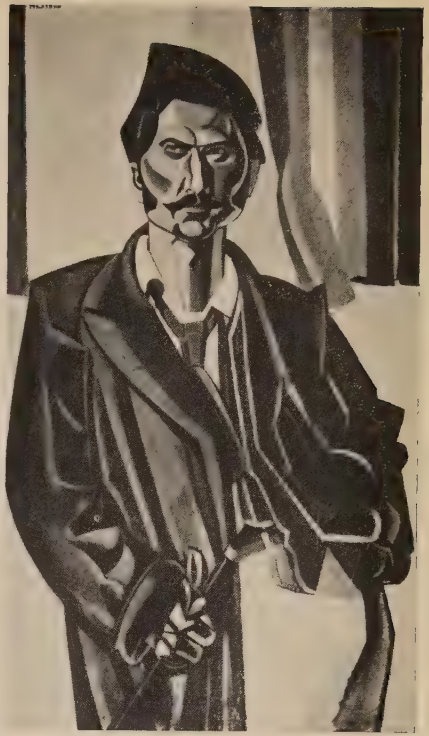
much the same whether it commands a military force or an industrial army. Thoughtful observers who have watched the working of labour-saving appliances have often been tempted to wonder whether Man is the master of Machinery or whether, perchance, Machinery is the master of Man. It is this latter thought that Epstein, consciously or subconsciously, has expressed in *The Rock Drill.*

It is not yet sufficiently recognized that there are two Jacob Epsteins. There is, first of all, Epstein the realist, whose powerful modelling, grasp of form, and searching characterization may be seen in such busts as his *Lord Fisher* in the Imperial War Museum and his superb *Jacob Kramer* in the Tate Gallery. These are works which all can understand and appreciate. But, secondly, there is Epstein the dreamer, the plastic philosopher whose works and the ideas which they contain are less generally comprehended. This is the Epstein of *The Sun God*, *Christ*, and *The Rock Drill.* It is useless to judge this second group of works by the standards we apply to the first. In *The Rock Drill* Epstein is striving after something totally different from what he strove after in his *Lord Fisher.* The last was based on vision: *The Rock Drill* is based on an idea.

This strange monster, this inhuman creature with its aspect of relentless power and determination, of monkeylike inquisitiveness and ingenuity, and of machinelike precision and callousness, is a symbol of the brute force that stifles human thought, curtails human liberty, and mangles human bodies. It is this horrible Moloch, and all it stands for, that Epstein has expressed plastically; only instead of labelling it as a denunciation of Prussian militarism he has chosen to hurl his invective in bronze against the blacker aspect of the baser form of industrialism. It is a reflection on the intelligence of the age that this tremendous feat of creative imagination—executed in 1913—is, at the moment of writing, still in the possession of the sculptor.

The Rock Drill is not deliberate propaganda; it is the expression of a thought that has flitted through the minds of many men in many lands. A great artist, passionately interested in life, is curiously sensitive to ideas which circulate in the mental atmosphere; these ideas he is often unable to put into words, and their social or economic significance often escapes him. But in his own way he feels them, pictorially or plastically, and moved by something greater than himself he gives them appropriate expression. *The Rock Drill* is an ex-

THE ROCK DRILL
Jacob Epstein



EZRA POUND
P. Wyndham Lewis

pression of a thought of the age, a thought which had not become common or generally intelligible when Epstein was impelled to give it plastic utterance. For the great artist is not only of his age, he is ahead of it. Epstein's imaginative work is the most successful application of Cubist ideas to sculpture.

Familiarity with the working of the war-machine prepared the mind of the public to accept that vision of the world as a complicated piece of mechanism which is the essence both of Cubism and Futurism. The men in Mr Nevinson's early War paintings, and in Mr Wyndham Lewis's drawings and paintings of the big guns at work, did not look like men as civilians see them; but they did express how soldiers felt about themselves.

The Vorticists, who in 1914 were merely exercising their inventive talents, had offered to them in the War one of the few subjects which their technique was fitted to express. For the Cubist method, as Clutton-Brock pointed out,

> does express, in the most direct way, the sense that in war man behaves like a machine or part of a machine, that war is a process in which man is not treated as a human being, but as an item in a great instrument of destruction, in which he ceases to be a person and is lost in a process. The Cubist method, with its repetition

and sharp distinction of planes, expresses this sense of a mechanical process better than any other way of representation.

Since to view man as a mere machine is to have a wrong conception of life, it follows that any art based on this conception must be either satirical or perverse. The Cubist War pictures by Messrs Lewis, Nevinson, Roberts, and others are all of them grim and terrible satires, and as such they have their value. But this method of painting cannot fruitfully be applied to any subject in which man is not regarded as part of a machine. Nevinson was perfectly right to abandon it when he exchanged the battlefields of Flanders for the peaceful garden-parties of England. Edward Wadsworth was equally right to retain it in his impressions of the Black Country; for industrialism, like war, treats man as part of a great machine. Unless we are afflicted by another war it is in industrialism, and in industrialism alone, that the Cubist will find his right material.

The attempt to apply the Cubist formula to the common types and commonplaces of life—which Wyndham Lewis made in his *Tyro* paintings—has hitherto been unsatisfying and unconvincing. Apart from his portrait of Ezra Pound (Plate 30) —an immensely strong presentation of a cast-iron

personality—the more recent paintings of Wyndham Lewis have been disappointing and incomplete. A fine talent is in danger of dissipation owing to its owner's restless frittering away of his energies in lecturing and writing when he ought to be painting. Men who were his disciples in 1913 got ahead of him ten years later. William P. Roberts in *The Violet Hat*, shown at Wembley in 1924, and in other paintings has developed a powerful style in which a sense of weight and volume derived from Cubism is combined with a simplicity and directness of utterance which may be regarded as the legacy of *Fauvisme*. Edward Wadsworth revealed the same qualities of clean definition and directness, with an added clarity of colour, in his incisive painting *La Rochelle*, shown at the New English Art Club in 1923, and in the works at his one-man show in the Leicester Galleries. Other painters, unconnected with Vorticism, have been affected by this new style, which is slowly making its way to the front in London as well as in Paris.

The outstanding painting in the Royal Academy of 1925 was Mrs Dod Procter's *The Model* (Plate 31), a picture definitely allied to the style of Roberts and Wadsworth, personal and not imitative, yet definitely descended from Cézanne and

Picasso. It was not a Cubist painting; it was realistic, clear, and perfectly intelligible; but it was a picture which, but for the Cubists, could never have been painted. Thanks to her skill and intelligence and what she had learnt from the Cubists, Mrs Procter was able to endow her figure-painting with a strength and volume that smashed all the other figure-paintings in the Academy into smithereens. At the first glance this granite-like presentation of a girl's face and body, with its rather 'steely' colour, might well appear 'hard' to an inexperienced Academy visitor. But it was neither unfeeling nor unkind. It was a simple, direct, well-controlled statement of the bedrock of humanity: it was certainly not soft, but it was not without tenderness and even pathos.

Though a lonely figure at Burlington House, *The Model* gave the London public an opportunity of seeing what the painting of the immediate future is going to be like. For this painting, together with the others I have mentioned above, reveals what will be the vision of the twentieth century. It is the vision not merely of a handful of painters in England, but of the youth of Europe. It is a stern vision, the vision of those whose eyes have been seared by the horrors of war; but it is a vision clear and unflinching, brave

THE MODEL
Mrs Dod Procter

130

and unashamed. Wyndham Lewis sowed the wild oats of Vorticism, but he has allowed other painters to reap the fruits thereof.

The War put an end to the period of indecision and uncertainty. The thought and the painting of Young Europe to-day may be erroneous or wrong-headed, but it is at least definite. There is no wavering, no vagueness.

Lewis, Mrs Procter, Roberts, and Wadsworth —these and others have derived their technical inspiration directly or indirectly from France. But side by side with the spatial definition which is the common characteristic of the Post-Cubist painters of France and England there has grown up another movement, superficially different, but fundamentally with a similar aim, which appears to be of genuine native origin. Clear definition is the common characteristic of these painters also, but the definition inclines to be flat rather than spatial.

In this direction the work of Augustus John —not his portraits, but his decorative paintings— has had some influence, but not the preponderating influence attributed to him by some fervent if undiscriminating admirers; and, since John himself has undoubtedly been influenced in his decorative work by Gauguin, Matisse, and other French

painters, so far as the influence is 'Johnian' it is indirectly French.

Before 1914 Henry Lamb had shown in a picture exhibited at the New English Art Club that a flat, decorative convention could be combined with an unsurpassable intensity of emotion. His modern *pietà The Death of a Peasant* was the first great tragic picture England produced in the twentieth century, and it heralded Britain's revolt from an Impressionism it had never really known or understood. A few years later, when the War was already in progress, a young painter fresh from the Slade School revealed remarkable painter-like qualities and a similar preoccupation with clear definition. The reputation of Stanley Spencer dates from the exhibition of his *Bed Picture* at the New English Art Club, and though he and his almost equally gifted brother Gilbert have relapsed from time to time into archaism and affectation his self-portrait at Wembley in 1924 again showed his power. Even his most unhappy essays in the manner of Giotto have never been wanting in clear outlines and decorative design.

Though he has since developed a clean-cut, clear-coloured style of his own, the influence of Augustus John on the early work of Henry Lamb may be admitted. It is less easy to detect it in the

THE VILLAGE CHURCH
Ethelbert White

painting of Stanley and Gilbert Spencer. It is almost impossible to trace it in the work of another pair of brothers, Paul and John Nash, who with Ethelbert White, more than any others, stand for flat definition in the new English movement. John Nash is a self-taught artist, Paul Nash was for a time at the Slade, but neither of them has much in common with the orthodox style of the famous school in Gower Street.

So far back as 1911 and 1912 watercolours by the brothers Nash began to attract notice at the New English Art Club, watercolours which revealed an extraordinary innocence of vision and a sense of delight and wonderment in all seen and painted. The foundation of their work was drawing, and their line had a fascinating calligraphic quality, but their drawings were not lightly tinted; the colour was full and strong, laid on in flat washes. These drawings were primitive without aping a Primitive; they were simplified without a sign of their authors ever having heard of Gauguin or Matisse. So far as they could be related to anything in pre-existing art these water-colours could claim a certain kinship with the drawings of Blake and the very earliest works of the earliest of the Pre-Raphaelites.

Paul Nash leaped into a quick popularity as a

War artist, his watercolours being the most poignant expression in art of the emotions of nerve-wracked soldiers. They contained exaggerations, but the things exaggerated were always significant. They inspired pity and terror, because they revealed not so much what soldiers saw as what they had good cause to fear. Ignorant alike of the precepts and example of Matisse, Paul Nash had the same end in view—Expression. Consciously or unconsciously he painted what he felt. In *Inverness Copse* he showed us plainly that what he felt above all was the abomination of desolation caused by war, the agony of torment inflicted on a happy, peaceful countryside. His watercolour was a cry from the heart protesting against the black crime of war. Never yet has Paul Nash felt so strongly about anything else as he felt about the War, and inevitably he has never done anything since so powerful and moving as his War drawings. Quite possibly he may be a better draughtsman, a better designer, and a better painter now than he was then; but craftsmanship is one thing and art is another, and in art deep feeling always goes farther than great skill.

Another wholly English artist, akin to John Nash in the simple directness of his outlook on life, is Ethelbert White, whose work has got

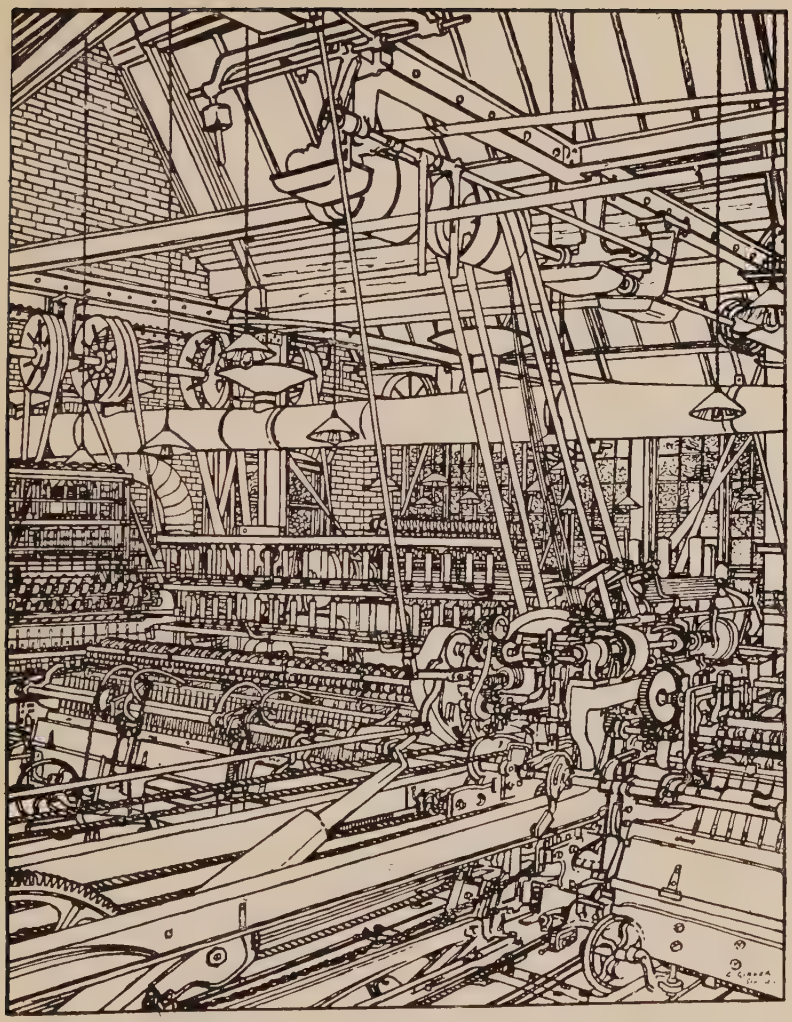
DEVON LANDSCAPE
Robert Bevan

better and better since the War. He has pruned himself of his early mannerisms and reduced the vision expressed in his oils and watercolours to a clear statement of essentials arranged with an eye to decorative effect and expressed with a tranquil but deep emotion (see Plate 32). These three young artists, who owe little or nothing to France, may be counted as the founders and leaders of a new style which, at present, finds its happiest expression in watercolours and woodcuts. In their work, and in the work of many others akin to them in temperament and outlook, little emphasis is laid on volume or recession; but in all, however much their individual styles may vary, there is the same substructure of line, the same pursuit of clear definition.

Every new style has its forerunners. The forerunners of this group of English Neo-Primitives were two painters whose work for many years attracted little attention. Many British painters have had the name of Gauguin glibly on their lips: almost the only one who knew him and worked with him at Pont-Aven in Brittany was the late Robert Bevan, and nobody who knows his work would imagine that Bevan was influenced by Gauguin. Yet Bevan, in his own personal way, was a true and independent Post-Impressionist;

for, while accepting the palette of the Impressionists as a *fait accompli*, Bevan steadily simplified his rendering of his subjects and gave emphasis and definition to his design by accentuating contours and linear structure. Alike in his inimitable pictures which chronicled the passing of the hansom-cab and the last vestiges of London's horse traffic and in his later, still more definitely decorative landscapes (see Plate 33) and street-scenes Bevan progressed from complexity to simplicity, from a *penchant* for atmospheric effects to a passion for clean definition. His life's work typifies the trend of European painting as it passed out of the nineteenth into the twentieth century.

No less significant a figure—though he seems to stand apart from all his contemporaries—is Charles Ginner. A pupil of the Spaniard Anglada, a fervent admirer of Van Gogh, an interested spectator of the experiments of the earliest Cubists, English by birth and descent, but French by education and residence, Ginner came from Paris to London in 1910 and proceeded to demonstrate that there was still a good deal to be said for Pre-Raphaelite principles. Passionately interested in detail, not so much for its own sake as because it might serve usefully as an element with which to enrich his designs, Ginner has put forth year after



THE GREAT LOOM, LEEDS UNIVERSITY 136
Charles Ginner

year watercolours and oil-paintings in which a wealth of material is welded into decorative unity and structural coherence. The foundation of all his work is an incorruptible honesty of thorough draughtsmanship and a determination to fit everything on which his eye rests into a closely packed design.

Ginner too is definite, and his definition is miraculously exhaustive. He is equally interested in life and in the problems of abstract design, and he finds no difficulty in reconciling the two. Practically everything that can be found in a Cubist drawing may be found in the four corners of Ginner's *The Great Loom, Leeds University* (Plate 34). Even in this resolute tribute to the marvel of modern machinery he has contrived to add, as a rider, the fact that without the window there are still trees with foliage. With an all-embracing interest in everything, Ginner neither rages against the existence of machinery nor becomes so absorbed in its wonders as to forget nature. With unfailing good-nature, with unremitting patience, without a trace of condescension or arrogance, he presents the scene to us as a whole with the one comment, "This is life." That is the wonderful thing about his drawing of this subject, which in other hands might so easily have become dead and

mechanical: his loom is alive, and not only the loom, but the room in which it stands and the surroundings without. Into this rigid geometrical pattern the human element enters with the eye of the spectator. The loom is seen by a human intelligence, not by a camera or recording machine.

So contrary apparently to the spirit of his age, fascinated by detail when detail is so unfashionable that the most successful portrait painters make a point of leaving hands unfinished, delighting in the complicated embroidery of nature's patterning when all around him painters are urging their brethren to simplify and simplify yet again, Ginner nevertheless stands solidly for the two things about which the advancing twentieth century appears to be most concerned, precise definition and clear, logical structure.

If definition be your aim, then the more you define the better, and you cannot define a wall more precisely and exhaustively than by indicating the number and variety of the bricks of which it is composed. Ginner does this, not as a duty, but with the gusto of a man who enjoys finding out all about everything. What his unique art expresses, among other things, is the unquenchable thirst for knowledge of an intelligent man. What his design conveys to us is his determination to find a plan

THE BACK STAIRCASE 138
Charles Ginner

and meaning among all this welter of variety. The knowledge sought must always be clear and definite. No guesses, no vagueness, no 'shots in the dark' can be tolerated. Either things are, or they are not; if they are, they must be recognized and stated. The truth must not be disguised, but there is every reason why it should be stated as succinctly and logically as possible. The painter who can see beauty in a backyard (see Plate 35) or in the lumber of a timber-yard can assuredly never be accused with justice of being wanting in feeling; but, like a true Englishman, Ginner keeps his feelings well under control, he buries them as deeply as he can and makes his primary appeal not so much to passion and emotion as to intelligence. Here he joins hands with the reformed Cubists. After wallowing in an excess of emotionalism during its first two decades, the twentieth century has pulled itself together and, remembering that man is or ought to be a thinking animal, addresses itself no longer to man's hopes and fears but to human reason.

CHAPTER VII

THE TRIUMPH OF DESIGN

Many things difficult to design prove easy of performance.
DR JOHNSON

In each generation the human race has been tortured that their children might profit by their woes. Our own prosperity is founded on the agonies of the past. Is it therefore unjust that we also should suffer for the benefit of those who are to come?
WINWOOD READE

IT may be said with sufficient justice that in all ages taste is apt to be controlled by one dominant art. Painting probably had its most glorious hours in the fourteenth and early fifteenth centuries; for during the later Renaissance sculpture rose to the highest eminence, and painting itself was affected by sculptural ideals. In the eighteenth century it can hardly be denied that the dominant art was literature. People saw pictures in relation to the ideas of a time which was governed, in matters of taste, by the written word. The sculptural ideal was not wholly lost sight of in the work of Sir Joshua Reynolds and his more eminent contemporaries, but more and more, as the years rolled on, the taste of the time showed itself to be more concerned with idea than with form. Richard Wilson—the great genius who anticipated Constable, Turner, and Old Crome in

his devotion to pure landscape—was compelled by his patrons to people landscape, which alone absorbed him, with figures pretending to play a part in some legend of Greece or Rome. The importance attached to the subject in Victorian painting is a matter of common knowledge; this preoccupation runs through all the schools, and threads together the warring styles of the Classics, the Romantics, and the Pre-Raphaelites. At its best it gave England a golden decade of illustration; at its worst it allowed the Royal Academy to sink into anecdotage. And of this time the slogan —the reverberation of which even yet has not altogether died away—was: "Every picture tells a story."

But about the middle of the nineteenth century a change in the general taste began to declare itself. Painters enunciated a new war-cry: "Every picture sings a tune." Literature gradually lost the leadership, and all the arts prostrated themselves before the altar of Music. Music, so to speak, was in the air. No works of art in the nineteenth century provoked so much attention, anger, discussion, and controversy as the music-dramas of Wagner—Wagner who, contrary to the current of his time, was accused of degrading music from its height of splendid isolation and of dragging it

into the hurly-burly in an attempt to make it a vehicle for the expression of concrete ideas. Indeed, Wagner with his mania for the association of ideas was a traitor to the true cause. Of that cause the most eloquent champion in England was Walter Pater, who in his essay on "The School of Giorgione" (1877) saw

> . . . all the arts in common aspiring towards the principle of music; music being the typical or ideally consummate art, the object of the great *Anders-streben* of all art, of all that is artistic or partakes of artistic qualities.
>
> "All art constantly aspires towards the condition of music." For while in all other works of art it is possible to distinguish the matter from the form, and the understanding can always make this distinction, yet it is the constant effort of art to obliterate it.

Is it not significant that in the very year in which Pater penned these lines Whistler reaped a whirlwind by exhibiting his "nocturnes" at the Grosvenor Gallery? And had not Whistler previously displayed his aspiration toward the principles of music by describing other of his paintings as "harmonies" and "symphonies"?

Literature itself was swamped by the rising tide of music, and on both sides of the Channel arose expositors who explained that the precious thing in poetry was not the sense, but the sound. Stevenson in his essay on "Elements of Style"

(1885) almost persuaded us that the virtue of Shakespeare and Milton resided in their manipulation of letters, in the artful alliteration of consonants, in the subtle assonance of vowels. He made these things clear to us by presenting Shakespeare in a new setting:

> The BaRge she sat iN, like a BURNished throNe
> BURNt oN the water: the POOP was BeateN gold,
> PURPle the sails and so PERFumèd that
> The wiNds were lovesick with them.

R.L.S. calls our attention to the F in "perfumèd," because "this change from P to F is the completion of that from B to P, already so adroitly carried out." Warming to his task, he gently chides Milton because, in a certain passage, "S and R are used a little coarsely." All that Stevenson says is perfectly true, only the first-rate poet does these things unconsciously. To attempt the feat consciously is to be a craftsman, not an artist; and this difference in consciousness goes some way toward explaining the difference between Stevenson himself and Shakespeare or Milton. But the musical bias of Stevenson's analysis can hardly be disputed, while in Paris Mallarmé was preaching the same gospel in still more sensuous but far less comprehensible language.

Not only Whistler, but the whole of the

Impressionist school, was influenced by the general control of taste which music exercised in the latter part of the nineteenth century. Critics of painting changed their vocabulary and, abhorring 'sentiment' as something not fit to be mentioned in polite society, discoursed learnedly on 'melody of line' and the 'orchestration of colour.' Whistler, it will be remembered, was distinctly annoyed because a spectator ventured to discern 'character' in his *Portrait of the Artist's Mother*, a picture which the painter asked us to regard merely as an 'arrangement in greys and blacks.' Since there was no need, it was argued, for the clear telling of a story, clarity went out of fashion as a quality for a picture to possess. If we may judge from the jargon of the time it would appear to have been held that 'tone,' 'atmosphere,' and 'colour' were the qualities most to be desired in a picture, and several painters met the demand by supplying these and very little else. Admirable enough in their place, these three qualities are of a musical rather than a literary order. Is any more evidence required to indicate the dominance of musical ideas in the *fin-de-siècle* period? One curious fact may be noted, namely, that music itself was affected through painting by the ideas which it had itself excited. Chopin inspired Whistler; Whistler

inspired Debussy, as the composer himself avowed. Atmosphere and colour, which the Impressionists embraced as their chief good, found an unprecedented intensity of musical expression in *L'Après-midi d'un Faune* and Ravel's *Jeux d'Eau*.

But are the ideals of the nineties still dominant to-day? Have not both music and painting changed drastically, not merely in style, but in character? Is the taste of to-day different, not only in degree, but in direction, from the taste of yesterday? And if so, "by what art is our taste now controlled?" This is an inquiry I propose to pursue.

In the very early years of the present century I was being hospitably entertained one evening by a painter, now an eminent Academician. The talk naturally fell on art, and it was debated what was the greatest and most important quality for a painting to possess. The first suggestion, entirely in the spirit of the time, was that the king of pictorial virtues was Colour. "No," said the painter; "colour is very important, of course, but the first and most important quality in any picture is Design." Mr Greiffenhagen was right. Stevenson said something to the same effect in the essay already quoted; but, if it be 'imperative' that the pattern should be made in every work of art, it appears to be equally true that in painting as well

as in poetry the most perfect patterns are made unconsciously or subconsciously.

Any person who has frequented the art exhibitions of London and Paris during the past thirty years must have observed that the greatest difference between the pictures of the past and of the present is that there is less and less of the 'foggy' Impressionist type of picture, in which 'atmosphere' was the goal, and more and more of a clear, clean-hewn type of picture in which the accent is laid on design. This tendency, visible in pictures of all descriptions in Paris as in London, has become most pronounced in the modern water-colour. From it has arisen a new school of water-colour, which is perhaps the most rich in promise of any contemporary British art movement.

It seems only the other day that educational authorities were endeavouring to persuade us that the blob was the foundation of all excellence in watercolour. Seduced by the magic of Brabazon, who could suggest unrealizable beauties by his deft juxtaposition of spots of colour, and dazzled by the brilliance with which the late Mr John Sargent could convey a sense of actuality by a few breezy washes of various tints, young artists, devoid of the genius of these masters and without their experience of long disciplinary training, pro-

ceeded to throw watercolour about and aim at an 'effect.' Unsupported by the scaffolding of sound drawing, the visions were usually weak and chaotic, but from time to time received a crumb of praise for their expression of atmosphere. Now all this has changed.

Hardly had the blob been included as an integral part of elementary education than it was discarded by the most serious and gifted young professionals who aimed at excellence in watercolour. Since about 1910 watercolour drawings, based upon the definite line and decorative composition of the early topographical draughtsmen of Great Britain, have become increasingly conspicuous in London exhibitions. At first the headquarters of the new movement was inside the New English Art Club, where the linear qualities in masterly drawings by Mr Muirhead Bone and Sir C. J. Holmes set an example to the younger generation. Sir D. Y. Cameron, R.A., gave a similar lead to the artists of Scotland.

While accepting watercolours based on linear design, the New English Art Club did not exclude watercolours built up by blobs. The younger aquarellists felt sufficiently strongly on the question of draughtsmanship to wish to set forth their ideals in a more clear and unmistakable manner.

Early in 1923 was formed the Modern English Watercolour Society, which in the April of that year held its first exhibition at the St George's Gallery. Among the founders of this society were Messrs R. P. Bevan, Charles Ginner, Malcolm Milne, the brothers Nash, W. Ratcliffe, H. Rushbury, Walter Taylor, Francis Unwin and Ethelbert White—all very different in style, but all having respect for drawing in common, and all basing their pictures primarily on a careful construction in line.

'Construction,' we should note, is a word now constantly on the lips of artists and critics. Mr Adrian Stokes, R.A., tells us, for example, in his book on *Landscape Painting* (1924), that "Construction and proportion are, in landscape as in the art of figure-painting, the foundations on which good drawing is built up." Claude Monet, the pioneer of Impressionism, wished to "paint as a bird sings": the twentieth-century painter speaks quite naturally of "building up" a picture.

Another slightly earlier movement needs to be chronicled. Killed as a reproductive process by the invention of photography, wood-engraving sprang into new life in the twentieth century as a means of original artistic expression. Mr Gordon

Craig, Mr Laurence Housman, and Mr Sturge Moore were prominent among the pioneers who, little by little, insinuated original woodcuts among the prints shown in mixed exhibitions. Gradually the wood-engravers increased in strength and numbers till they felt in 1919 that it was time to found their own society. Only Mr Craig, Mr Lucien Pissarro, and Mrs Raverat represent the pioneers in the Society of Wood-Engravers, other prominent members being Messrs Robert Gibbings, Eric Gill, Charles Ginner, Sydney Lee, John and Paul Nash, Noel Rooke, and Ethelbert White. It is not altogether without significance that several of the "Modern English" aquarellists are also wood-engravers. The exhibition of woodcuts is not confined to this one centre: they have made their way even into the exhibitions of the Royal Society of Painter-Etchers.

Nor is this all. In addition to providing prints for wall-decorations and for the collector's portfolio, wood-engravers have embellished books with illustrations. From such semi-private enterprises as the Eragny and Vale Presses they have migrated to orthodox publishers. In 1922 Messrs Duckworth and Co., courageously deciding to explore the possibilities of woodcuts, published twenty-seven prints selected by Mr Campbell Dodgson

as *Contemporary English Woodcuts*. Since then this firm has published a series of handsome volumes decorated with woodcuts, and this example has been followed by the Bodley Head and other publishing firms. Many books illustrated with woodcuts have also been published in Paris during recent years.

Unless we recur to phrases about 'melody of line' and 'rhythm' it must be conceded that the characteristic musical qualities of 'tone,' 'atmosphere,' and so forth are entirely absent in the woodcut and wood-engraving. In this exceedingly pure form of black-and-white art the two qualities which make or mar the work are drawing and design, and of these design is certainly the more vital. If a woodcut cannot hold our attention and delight us by its design it is a complete failure. Not only is this revival of the woodcut a remarkable thing in itself, but the appreciation it has met with is equally noteworthy. In one small gallery alone over seven hundred wood-engravings were sold during a twelvemonth. This sudden popularity of an art that is far more intellectual than sensuous surely indicates a certain change in the public taste and a revived interest in design.

In the welter of contemporary oil-paintings signs of this revival are more difficult to trace. It

may be granted, however, that much of the wilful distortion of form and abrupt statement which characterizes so-called 'Post-Impressionist' pictures is due to a perverse and extravagant desire to exalt design at the expense of vision. A more normal and more generally welcome indication of the same tendency at work is the greatly increased employment of mural painting both in Europe and in the United States. Not only in public buildings, but in many private dwellings, isolated cabinet pictures—having no relation to each other—are gradually being ousted in favour of a suite of panels by the same artist, or by a group of artists in sympathy with each other. On the evidence we may fairly assume that decorative rather than illustrative ideals prevail to-day in the pictorial arts. There is no swinging back, as yet, to the story-telling ideals of the mid-Victorian period; there is no vital development of the once fashionable idea of 'painted music'; paintings, watercolours, and prints are rather actuated by a new impulse, an impulse springing directly from an appreciation of design.

What exactly do we mean by this word 'design'? According to the *Oxford Dictionary* it stands for

> mental plan; scheme of attack upon; purpose; end in view; adaptation of means to ends; preliminary sketch

for picture, etc.; delineation, pattern; artistic or literary groundwork, general idea, construction, plot, faculty of evolving these; invention.

In this comprehensive definition we cannot fail to observe the recurrence of words which have a definite architectural significance—'plan,' 'groundwork,' 'construction.' An insistence on the importance of design indicates a very different attitude toward art and painting than that adopted by Whistler and his circle, who rather wished to let laymen imagine that a picture 'happened,' arrived as by a miracle from on high.

This new spirit has not only animated the fine arts, but has had far-reaching effects on our manufactures and on industry generally. The Anglo-Saxon mind has always been quicker to conceive and apprehend an idea than to fashion and appreciate beauty of form, and that—Stevenson notwithstanding—is the first cause why, by common consent of the world, English poets have attained a far higher rank than any English painters and sculptors. But under the stress of foreign competition the British manufacturer is slowly learning that it is not enough for wares to be strongly made of good material; if they are to hold their position in the markets of the world they must also be attractive in design. In every movement the many

are galvanized into action by the energy of a few; the better taste now displayed in British textiles, pottery, metalwork, printing, etc., is due to the organizing initiative of a group of artist-craftsmen. In his introduction to the first *Year Book* (1922) of the society Mr C. H. Collins Baker tells us that

> The Design and Industries Association was founded in 1915 by a handful of practical enthusiasts to combat the unpractical influences in British design and industry. They discovered that British things—furniture, textiles, pottery, printing, and so on—were often poor because they were not designed and constructed principally to do their job with maximum efficiency. Hence arose the chief article of their creed—"Fitness for purpose"—and the courage to restate that, if a thing were unaffectedly made to fulfil its purpose thoroughly, then it would be good art. Thus, at one blow, the formidable superstition that real art depended on the elaboration and disguise of multiplied ornament was challenged.
>
> The foundation of the D. I. A. was an inevitable response to a practical need. Our enthusiasts were not dreamers. . . . Nor did they shirk the facts of modern life. They did not indulge the view that machinery, a vulgar, vile affair, caused all our modern ills. . . . They had the larger vision which perceives that the disease of modern design and industry was due not to machinery, but to the imperfect comprehension of its limitations and possibilities. They saw that if modern design were frankly conditioned by the special capability of the *de facto* agent of production, fine art and craftsmanship were compatible with machine-made goods.

What the Association set out to do first of all was to curb the Victorian passion for 'added

ornament.' It had to combat the 'atrophied taste' of the public, the distributor, and the producer, and, though there is still much to be done, its victory is in sight. Already it has done more than any other society in educating the public to a right appreciation of fitness in furniture and other household goods. Slowly but surely a consciousness is spreading that 'decoration' does not mean some added and usually unnecessary ornament, but the whole mode of conception and manner of treatment of a work of art. In its zeal for efficiency the Association has given a new beauty to our manufactures. On all sides we see improvements. Raised patterns, which harboured dirt and deluded the vulgar with their ostentation, have been practically banished from our pottery and glass. The fantastic and illegible types which once flaunted from every placard have been replaced by clear, legible lettering of simplicity and beauty, an admirable example in this and in other respects having been set by the singularly enlightened Tube railways of London.

Meanwhile, it may be asked, what about music? Does it reveal signs of having been exposed to a new influence? Is it proceeding in a new direction? Let us be candid. Analogies between music and other arts are exceedingly difficult to trace, and

often rest on nothing better than a play upon words. Nevertheless, the influence of literature on music during the first half of the nineteenth century—the Romantic period—is undeniable; in the last quarter of the same century—the Impressionist period—great play was made of 'colour' in music. In the years just before the Great War a tendency which pointed in an opposite direction made itself felt. To-day, from the generation which has grown up under these influences, the cry goes up, "Away from literature," and the problem of analogies assumes a different and a more vague aspect. With Stravinsky's music one may or may not agree; but one thing is certain—he is mainly responsible for the change. Stravinsky's first move was toward the most primitive form of music, an insistence on and persistence in rhythm akin to the music of the primitive tribesman's tom-tom. Jazz music is an offshoot of the same tendency.

At the same time there is another tendency in modern music which runs parallel to Stravinsky's, and that is a return to the polyphonic writing of the sixteenth century with two important consequences: a turning away from chordal writing as such (harmony), and an effort to get rid of tonality either by doing away with tonal feeling altogether or by so enlarging our existing tonal system—

based in reality on two scales only, major and minor—that the feeling of tonality (*i.e.*, the obligatory return and constant relation to a given key) becomes more or less blunted.

If either, or both, of the latter tendencies, personified by Schönberg, may be regarded as having come to stay—and many experienced musicians have no doubt that they will stay—then it seems tolerably certain that structure will have to be changed. The sonata form, which has superseded all other forms of serious music, is based on two main features: opposing themes and opposing tonalities. In the hands of the classics the sonata form runs as follows: a principal theme in the principal key, a second theme in the next related key, generally the dominant; subsequently the order is reversed, the principal theme in the dominant (or relative minor key) and the second in the principal key, leading to the return of the first subject in that same principal key. It will be seen at once that such a scheme is not possible if, *primo*, all themes have equal rights and run parallel, as in polyphony, and if, *secundo*, the feeling of tonality is abolished. There may therefore be an increased interest in structure, though probably that interest will be, so far as music is concerned, not so much in structure *per se* as curiosity concern-

ing what the new structure will be. It will at least be allowed that polyphony seems to open the door to 'plan,' 'groundwork,' and 'construction.'

Not only in modern composing but also in modern appreciation of music ought we to look for indications of the direction in which taste is travelling. One straw may here be cited. Some weeks ago a keen musician was endeavouring to explain to the writer the exact effect which the rendering of a certain composition had made on him as played by Backhaus. "He seemed to present it as a solid block," he said. It would be foolish to press these analogies too far, but there is further testimony which cannot be suppressed. Who can deny that the appreciation of Bach is infinitely wider and deeper to-day than it was thirty years ago? And is not Bach the supreme architect in music?

If appreciation as well as creation is to count, then we have ample direct evidence of a vastly increased popular interest in architecture. An important witness is the recently founded Architecture Club, whose two exhibitions of models and photographs, held at Grosvenor House in 1923 and 1924, were different from all preceding architectural exhibitions in that they were organized by laymen for laymen, and not by architects for

architects. They were intended to interest the public, and the public came in its thousands and was interested. Similarly we may point to the flood of architectural books which have been published during the last few years, not by any means all books written by architects for members and students of their own profession, but books by popular writers, books written for and bought by the general public. The increasing space devoted to architecture in the Press is a further sign of the times, and, though the great organs of Fleet Street and Printing House Square have never altogether ignored architecture, it is certainly a novelty in journalism to find expository articles on the construction of Greek temples, Gothic cathedrals, Renaissance palaces, etc., in the pages of popular weeklies with immense circulations.

A present interest in architecture must infallibly be accompanied by an increased interest in the architecture of the past. One proof of this is remarkable because it has resulted in an entirely new enterprise in book-publishing. Many firms for many years past have issued series of volumes dealing with English poets and painters, but till Messrs Ernest Benn, Ltd., issued in 1924 the first volumes of their "British Architects" series no publisher had the courage to devote a series

of books to Inigo Jones, Sir Christopher Wren, and their successors.

If I am right in believing that architectural ideas are influencing other arts, then we may expect architecture itself to justify its hegemony of taste by splendid achievement. The twentieth century is not yet far advanced, and already there are signs of a new architecture in England. A writer in *The Times* recently went so far as to pronounce it "not unlikely that the year 1924 will mark a turning-point in the history of modern English architecture." He based his prophecy chiefly on Messrs Simpson and Ayrton's Exhibition buildings at Wembley:

> Without any deliberate flouting of tradition, they represent the definite acceptance of reinforced concrete on its own merits as a building material and the attempt to develop its architectural possibilities in dignified mass and construction through its own methods of construction.[1]

It is a commonplace of criticism to say that contemporary architecture is endeavouring to 'reconcile Gothic vitality with classic symmetry.' If so, our architects are endeavouring to reconcile irreconcilables. The Greek temple and the Gothic cathedral are the perfect fruits of the two most perfect systems of architecture which the wit of man has yet devised; but the ideas which animated

[1] *The Times*, February 10, 1925.

them are utterly incompatible. The first is static; the second is dynamic. The Greek temple is based on resignation and quiescence; the Gothic cathedral is founded on energy and aspiration. At the same moment no man and no building can be both perfectly quiet and perfectly energetic. The architects of the twentieth century have got to make up their minds which is to be their aim. At the beginning of this century, when all the talk was of steel construction, it seemed possible that the idea of energy might prevail, and that a metallic warfare of steel-ribbed edifices might lead to a style of architecture which—as March Phillipps said of the Gothic cathedral—was not so much a fabric as a 'fight.'

To-day all the talk is of ferro-concrete, and the greatest danger is lest, like the Romans, we have found, as Ruskin said, "a cheap and easy way of doing that whose difficulty was its chief honour." From the pitfall of 'added ornament' only public opinion and the architects can save us, and if the artificial monolith is to be the cornerstone of twentieth-century architecture, then we must hope for a style that is based not on irresistible force, but on the quiet grandeur of the irremovable mass.

'Mass'—that would appear to be the last word, as yet, of the twentieth century: flat masses in

decorative art, massive volumes in realism; combines in capital, amalgamations in labour organizations; mass formations in warfare, mob law in politics.

But opposed to the stolid movement and fickle opinion of the big battalions, to the waves of wireless beating the air, there stands inflexibly the individuality of the Artist and Thinker. These two go on their way slowly evolving law and order out of the chaos around them. But observe: each one of them, be he Artist or Thinker, frames laws for himself only and orders no man. He is all for precision, definition, and clarity; he knows exactly what is right for himself, but he disclaims all pretension to prescribe what is right for others. Each must find out for himself, each must work out his own rules, each has complete liberty within himself; and without he is also free to do as he thinks fit, provided only that he does not interfere with the equal liberty of others. That is the message of art to the twentieth century.

Whither we are all going it is very difficult to see; but the journey is exciting, and the road is full of interest.

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INDEX

Abstract art, 112
Academic art, 15, 19
Architecture, 158–160

Bahr, Hermann, his *Expressionism*, 62–66
Balla, Giacomo, 111
Bevan, Robert, 135–136
Bone, Muirhead, 147
Braque, Georges, 55, 65, 80, 84, 93–96
Byzantine art, 27–29

Cameron, Sir D. Y., 147
Carrière, Eugène, 46
Cézanne, Paul, 49, 58–68, 81, 122
Chardin, Jean Baptiste Simeon, 39, 60
Chavannes, Puvis de, 51, 72
Clausen, George, 122
Colour, problem of, 37–44
Constable, John, 39
'Crystallization,' 83
Cubism, 80–105

Degas, Edgar Hilaire Germain, 31
Delacroix, F. V. Eugène, 38
Denis, Maurice, 122
Derain, André, 52, 55, 56
Design, 151–153
Divisionism, 42
Dostoieffsky, Feodor Mikhailovitch, 119
Dürer, Albrecht, 86

El Greco, 117
Epstein, Jacob, 124–127
Expressionism, 112

Fauvisme, 56, 73
Fergusson, J. D., 79
Flandrin, Jules, 79
Friesz, Othon, 52
Fry, Roger, 48, 80
Futurism, 107

Gainsborough, Thomas, 39
Galton, Sir Francis, on visualizing, 62
Gauguin, Paul, 51, 52, 69, 71–79
Gilman, Harold, 121
Ginner, Charles, 121, 136–139
Giotto, 30, 52, 113
Gleizes, Albert, 98–103
Gore, Spencer, 121
Gothic art, 29
Greek art, 64

Holmes, Sir C. J., 122

Impressionism, defined, 34

John, Augustus, 122, 131, 132

Kandinsky, Wassily, 112
Kauffer, E. McKnight, 105

Lamb, Henry, 132
Landseer, Sir Edwin, 46
Léger, Fernand, 65, 96–97, 103
Lewis, P. Wyndham, 115, 123, 127–129

Manet, Édouard, 51
Marinetti, P., 108–110
Marquet, Albert, 78
Matisse, Henri, 52, 53, 55, 75–79
Metzinger, Jean, 104
Monet, Claude, 38, 39, 40, 46
Moreau, Gustave, 53
Music, 141 ff., 154–157

NASH, JOHN, 133–134
Nash, Paul, 133–134
Negro art, 55
Neo-Impressionism, 42
Neolithic art, 25–27
Nevinson, C. R. W., 110, 127

PALÆOLITHIC art, 24, 27
Pater, Walter, 142
Pattern, 50
Picasso, Pablo, 55, 65, 84, 86–89, 93, 107
Pissarro, Camille, 36, 38, 59
Pissarro, Lucien, 121
Pointillism, 41
Prismatic colour, 38
Procter, Mrs Dod, 129–131

RENOIR, AUGUSTE, 38, 59
Reynolds, Sir Joshua, 39, 140
Rice, Anne Estelle, 79
Roberts, William, 129
Rodin, Auguste, 46
Rosenberg, Léonce, 80, 104
Rubens, Peter Paul, 30

SADLER, SIR MICHAEL, 117
Sargent, John Singer, 146
Seurat, Georges, 32, 40
Severini, Gino, 107, 110
Sickert, Walter, 54, 121
Signac, Paul, 40
Sisley, Alfred, 38
Spencer, Gilbert, 132
Spencer, Stanley, 132
Stevenson, Robert Louis, 50, 142
Strzygowski, Professor Josef, 24, 32
Symbolism, 57

VAN DONGEN, KEES, 79
Van Gogh, Vincent, 68–71
Velazquez, Diego de Silva y, 55, 84
Vorticism, 120

WADSWORTH, EDWARD, 128–129
Whistler, James McNeill, 31, 36, 46, 142–144
White, Ethelbert, 133, 135
Wilson, Richard, 140
Wood-engraving, 148–150